

HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?

Ezekiel 4-7

One theme clearly revealed throughout the pages of Scripture:

God has given each of us a job to do for Him.

The job may be easy or difficult;

it may be pleasant or unpleasant;

it may seem important or insignificant.

God doesn't hold us responsible for the importance or degree of difficulty of the task.

He just asks that we be faithful to carry out our assignment,

that we use the resources He has given us, according to His plans, for His glory.

In Ezekiel we see two responses modeled

—two distinct ways to respond to God's plan for our life:

TWO DISTINCT RESPONSES

1st response modeled: that of Ezekiel himself.

Israel is in captivity in Babylonia.

God sends the prophet to teach His people Who He is.

They're rebellious; they don't want to listen to God's voice.

God chooses Ezekiel as a watchman, to sound the warning

God prepares Ezekiel by sending a vision of His glory,

and by making him strong enough to resist their attacks.

God warns Ezekiel not to imitate their rebellion

by refusing to do what God has called him to do.

He is sent to announce God's Word;

he is told to speak only when *GOD* says to speak;

not when the people want to listen!

In spite of the difficulty of the task & the personal discomfort

he will experience, Ezekiel carries out his job faithfully.

He presents an example of what Israel should have done.

He acknowledges God's sovereignty, and submits to His authority.

He does exactly what God instructs him to do.

God has spoken; Ezekiel will do what He desires.

2nd response modeled: that of Israel

God describes them as a rebellious house, unwilling to listen to Him.

Therefore, He is about to judge them.

Key revealing description: 5:7

[1st half of Ezekiel (1-32) --written *before* fall of Jerusalem to announce impending judgment]

PRE-EXILIC PROPHETS

Background: Sin & idolatry (rebellion/ disobedience)

Purpose: Repentance (correction)

Message: Judgment is coming!

FOUR SIGNS OF COMING JUDGMENT 4:1-5:4

Signs are all related

All point to a coming judgment.

Each focuses on a different aspect of that judgment.

1. CITY ON A TILE 4:1-3

God orders Ezekiel to build a miniature city on a clay brick and surround the city with instruments of war.

The city is attacked and destroyed.

That is what God is going to do to Jerusalem

God is going to destroy Jerusalem

Ezekiel takes part in the scene, placing himself in front of the miniature city, but separated from it by an iron plate.

God's protection, promised to Ezekiel (3:7-9), is thus assured.
 God's rebellious people want to destroy him because of
 his message

God is going to protect Ezekiel, as He promised.

2. **PROPHET ON HIS SIDE 4:4-8**

Ezekiel lies on his left side for 390 days, and his right side
 40 days

Each day represents one year.

The sign represents **the *invasion* of Jerusalem.**

God is going to judge Israel (N) for 390 years for
 their sin.

God is going to judge Judah for 40 years for
 their sin.

—total of 430 years for their rebellion.

Begins in 597 A.D., when Jehoiachin & Ezekiel taken captive;
 ends in 167, when Jews begin to govern their land again.

3. **DEFILED BREAD 4:9-17 (9-13)**

God orders Ezekiel to make bread out of six types of grain.

Unusual combination! They *never* mixed grains!

Food & water are rationed, which speaks of ***famine & thirst***.

Ezekiel is told to cook mixture on fire fueled by human
 excrement!

Dung to bake bread depicts inability to get firewood and
 extent of defilement.

It's easy to understand the prophet's reaction: **14**

To fulfill this command would make him unclean before God.
 God allows him to use cow manure instead, but He still
 affirms the humiliating circumstances they're living under.

Famine and drought produce shortage of grain and firewood

4. **SHAVED HEAD AND DIVIDED HAIR 5:1-4**

Ezekiel is to take a razor & shave both his head & his beard
Divides hair into 3 parts to represent what will happen to Israel: => 5:12

$\frac{1}{3}$ **will be burned**—die inside the city

$\frac{1}{3}$ **will be killed by enemy sword**—die outside the city in battle

$\frac{1}{3}$ **will be scattered in pagan nations**.

What is left is sewn into folds of garment.

Majority would be scattered; only a few would be left.

Eventually those left behind would be burned

Each sign was different, but all had purpose to make people aware of consequences of sin, and call them to repentance.

God makes Ezekiel mute, so he can't speak, and gives him difficult instructions to follow.

He doesn't turn away from the instructions, nor rebel.

[In the face of Israel's rebellion, Ezekiel's example stands out:]

EZEKIEL FAITHFULLY FULFILLS HIS COMMISSION

THREE EXPLANATORY MESSAGES 5:5-7:27

1. **EXPLANATION OF THE FOUR SIGNS 5:5-17**

God put Israel among nations, to reveal what He is like,
but she perverts His ordinances worse than the pagan nations around her.

They don't even submit to minimal moral/ethical standards the pagans accept! 5:5-7

Instead of being a light to other nations, Israel has become an obstacle.

ISRAEL REJECTED HER COMMISSION

Because of Israel's rebellion, God is about to bring severe judgment on them.

ISRAEL WILL BE DESTROYED

She'll witness to God's judgment against those who reject Him. 5:8-11

A third die of hunger, a third fall by the sword, and a third is scattered 5:12-17 (5:12-13)

"THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH!"

2. CAUSE OF JUDGMENT 6 6:1-3, 7

God is just; He won't judge them without valid cause.

His judgment is directed against the mountains, because there the people turned their back on God and worshipped pagan idols

God promises to destroy these "high places" and kill those who worship these gods.

Main cause of judgment: *idolatry*.

Even as he announces judgment, he promises to preserve a remnant.

He wants them to know He still loves them and has plans to bless them 6:8-10

4 times: **Result of judgment: (7, 10, 13, 14)**

"They will know that I am the Lord."

When they see what God has done, they will know Who He is, and will give Him the glory He deserves.

3. DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENT 7

The hardened condition of the people 7:1-13 (1-2, 4, 13)

They've become hardened to the message of the prophets because of the long delay.

Judgment would come *some day* but surely it was a long way off.

They never thought that *they* would see it.

Maybe the next generation, but not *them*!

That's why Ezekiel is so emphatic: The judgment has come.

This is their last chance to repent.

Details of impending judgment 7:14-27 27

There won't be anyone to fight for them, because they'll all be hungry and weak.

Many will have already died.

Those who escape will lament in shame and terror.

They will search for a prophet, but the law will have left him.

God won't help them because He will turn His back on them.

What a terrible judgment! But it's just what they deserve because of their rebellion.

Announcement should have been enough to call them to repentance.

In spite of announcements, they keep thinking God won't see what they're up to.

Therefore, he won't judge them.

Ezekiel was an example of what God wanted from Israel.

Israel should have been an example
of what God wanted from the nations.

We've observed two different responses to God's will and to His Word:

Ezekiel responds by fulfilling God's desire for him.

Israel refuses to fulfill God's desire—they pay the consequences for their refusal!

**Ezekiel, the faithful servant,
listened to God's voice and obeyed God's will
faithfully.**

**Israel, the rebellious servant,
refused to listen to God's voice,
and refused to do what God wanted them to do.**

Failure began by failing to carry out commission God gave them.
It ends in total rebellion against God.

God commissioned them to live a distinct lifestyle, different than the pagan nations around them.

**That lifestyle would show their love and worship for the
God who is worthy of our praise,
the Creator of the Universe.**

Instead of fulfilling their commission and living according to God's standards, they lived like their neighbors, and *sometimes worse*.

***Not only has Israel rebelled; she's WORSE than
the pagans around her!***

**God's people have become so used to having Him
around, they just do whatever they feel like!**

So God is looked down on and the light isn't seen.

In the end, God will send them the repayment they deserved.

WHAT LESSONS DO WE LEARN?

God established Jerusalem as a *light* to the nations.

Instead of fulfilling that mission,
they *imitate* the nations, worshipping the same idols they worship.

They want to look just like their neighbors!

Therefore God's judgment is about to come against them.

Is there a danger that WE might imitate OUR neighbors as they did?

What do our neighbors see in us?

God says, "*You are the light of the world!*"

Are WE a LIGHT or an obstacle?

Do we attract people to the Light?

Is it obvious that our God is worthy of worship and of our service?

Does the difference they see in our lives make them want to follow our God and serve Him?

Can they see a difference, or do we follow the same standards that people around us follow?

Which of these two responses to what God has said describes us?

Are we committed to faithfully serving Him, according to the abilities He has given us?

Are we serving Him half-heartedly?

Have we become so used to having Him around that we just go on about our merry way?

Have we rejected His call completely?

What reward do we deserve?

Will we receive the reward of a faithful servant, together with Ezekiel?

***Or, will we get ours together with Israel,
a rebellious servant who refuses to work for the Master?***