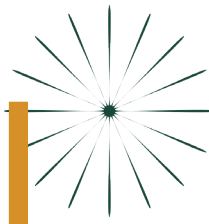


EZEKIEL



INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL

PART 1

A Story of Downfall and Restoration

SCRIPTURE: READ EZEKIEL 36:24-27

INTRODUCTION

The book of Ezekiel is an Old Testament book that deals mostly with the nations of Judah and Israel. The book was written by Ezekiel while Israel was in Babylonian captivity. Yehezkel (Hebrew for “Ezekiel) means “God strengthens” or “Strengthened by God”. We see that he is given strength by God to minister to the people throughout the entire book. (3:8, 9)

With Israel in captivity and Judah under the yoke of the Babylonian empire, Ezekiel was a prophet of God during a time that was politically strained for God’s people. God had warned Israel that if they did not give up their worship of false idols and turn back to Him there would be consequences and the children of Israel and Judah were experiencing those consequences. Many people thought that God was not as powerful as Marduk (the god of the Babylonians) since they lost the battles against the Babylonians. There are times in our own lives that we start to doubt whether God is there and if He cares for us or not. In His silence we must be reminded, as Ezekiel would be, that God has a remnant available and will never leave us alone. (Matt. 28:20)

There is always hope on the horizon when we follow God. Israel was going to return to God and He was going to restore them. He is a God of mercy and grace and that hasn’t changed. In chapter 36 we see that God had a wondrous plan for His children. He was going to give them a new heart (v. 26) He would cleanse them and restore them to His purposes. God has provided us with a new heart when we choose to follow Christ and not our own desires. (2 Corinthians 5:17) He has made us into a new creation. His Spirit has been given to us so that we are able to walk in His statutes and His judgements. (v. 27)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does it feel when God tells you to do something that you do not feel ready to do? What is your natural reaction? How might Ezekiel's reaction encourage you the next time God asks you to do something hard?
2. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." Knowing this, why do you think Israel was so susceptible to turning away from God's statutes and worshipping idols? What are some of the idols that we choose over God today? Why do we choose them? How can we be better prepared for the temptation and how can we choose God in that situation?
3. Was Marduk more powerful than God? Why did God allow His chosen people to fall to the Babylonians? Were the children of Israel justified in their anger towards God? (Read Hebrews 10:5-6) Have you always allowed God's chastisement to lead you closer to Him? Why or why not?
4. Given the context of these verses (v. 24-27), why do you think people believe that God has changed from the Old Testament? Do you think of God as having a different attitude towards people between the Old and New Testaments? How can we fear God and, at the same time, have a healthy and personal relationship with Him?
5. What does it mean to be a new creation? How do we show the world that we are made new?

WRAP UP

Ezekiel was called when the nation was in great turmoil and there was nothing that anyone could do about it. His call was to be faithful and to speak the words from God. Times were bleak but God was going to do some incredible things very soon. How much does that mirror where we are today?