

Intro.

- A. What John the Baptist was to early disciples, Ezekiel was to his contemporaries about 600 yrs. B.C.
1. He had been deported out of Judah into Babylonian bondage in the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of evacuees, about 8 yrs. after Daniel's group had been relocated by the Babylonians.
  2. To say that our subject was a colorful (& excentric) illustrator is an understatement of high proportion.
- B. His communicative ability was astonishing, and is seen in some of the distinctive word pictures he composed!
1. He made models, like his famous model of a city under siege. Crowds came to see his work, **4:1-4**
  2. As a gt. communicator, he met w/ leaders of the land (**8:1**), yet he cooked over campfires fueled by cowchips, **4:12, 15**
  3. He was prone to the bizzare. Ex.—he cut his hair & beard....with a bayonet, **5:1-4**
  4. Once he was seen walking in town w. knapsack over shoulder---- blindfolded! **12:1-2**
- C. It would have been *very interesting* to sit here tonight, listening to Ezek. tell his story.
1. Although he is not, we do have his book! (Like Harry Potter, sometimes the book > than the movie!)
  3. Ezek. lived in time when Israel didn't really come out to hear a sermon (**Ezek. 2:4f**) //word.
  4. His solution was to take unforgettable, bizarre & powerful illustrations to the people & impart God's ^
  5. We will only take time to look at 3 of the renown illustrations Ezek. gave & look for the lesson we need

Discuss.**I. THE MODEL OF JERUSALEM. Ezek. 4:1-3**

- A. The setting: **(1:2)**
1. Time = early Babylonian Captivity, **592 BC** (Some —like E — already been enslaved. Some still in Jeru.)
  2. Fake prophets “foresaw” a brief captivity & quick release, **13:2, 8-16**
  3. With E.'s model, God got the people's attention:
    - a. **4:1-3** E. drew map of Jeru. on Babylonian clay tablet. Apparently built miniture clay model of the city, & depicted the city under seige.
    - b. E. laid before the model a # of days, symbolized many yrs. of captivity!
  4. As the model was being constructed, the onlookers gathered to see the progress of this *weird prophet!*
  5. You can almost hear their comments under their breath -- *What's he doing know!?!?*
- B. The message was delivered, **5:5, 6a, 8**
1. **5:8** – Jeru.'s ruin  $\geq$  come as result of fickle fate, but of divine decree -- God was at work!
  2. Those who watched the model being developed & heard the explanation would not soon forget!!!
- C. Lesson: Power of an Illustration! (& of a life that exemplifies Christianity).
1. Some who may have never sat thru a sermon will sit up & take notice of the lesson of your life.
    - a. **Mt. 13:33** the leaven of kingdom  $\geq$  impersonal force – it's faithful Christians living the life!
    - b. **1 Pet. 3:1** many have been *won by* observing & imitating *the behavior* of friends & family
    - c. **1 Pet. 4:4** *They think it strange...* not having studied the Holy Book, but they are impressed by the 5<sup>th</sup> gosp. **Card #1**
  2. The power of a good example lives on & on, (**Heb. 11:4**)
  3. Let us be dertermined to build our lives on the Bible, so people will know *there has been a Christian among them.*

**II. THE ILLUSTRATON OF THE TEMPLE & COURT, Ezek. 8**

- A. Situation: E. was taken in vision to Jeru. temple.....(read) **8:7-9**
1. This was a mysterious hidden room, filled w/ scent of incense. See 70 elders worshipping idols.
  2. **vs. 12** – On walls are portrayed loathsome creatures involved in idol worship.
  3. Next, God took him to courtyard. There were 25 men standing w/ backs to E. worshipping **SUN!**
  4. **Interpretation:**
    - a. 70 elders = majority of Jews, secretly embraced idolatry
    - b. 25 were prob. priests/Levites who have taken final steps of apostasy & openly reject God's plan!

B. Results in **chpt. 9** ⇌ 7 angels go on slaughtering rampage thru Jeru.

1. Helps to know that this chpt. = a predictive prophecy of Zedekiah's revolt vs Babylonians.
2. While Babylonians were the tool of Jeru.'s destruction, God = Force behind it.

C. Lesson: God Knows Truth About Us.

1. We cannot escape His Spirit, **c. Psa. 139:7-12**

➡ (vs. 8)

- a. Some recall when Soviet cosmonauts 1<sup>st</sup> went into space. *We looked for God; He wasn't there!*
  - b. **Psa. 139:12** Imagine man using night vision sensors which allow him to see in dark, but these can be foiled by smoke. => **God can see thru the smoke, pretense & pain to see who we really are!**
2. **Psa. 73:21-23** - encourages us when weary f/ life's stresses.
- a. Sometimes we are "*stupid*" (New Cent. Bib. Commen. On Psa., pg. 535)
  - b. Still, God holds our hand as a Father will His children.
  - c. Usually mankind will shake heads in disappointment at our performance or attack our weakness. Not God – He knows just what I need, song # \_\_\_\_\_.
3. This admonishes us when we attempt to retreat into hidden rooms to sin.
- a. God saw Jonah underneath hardwood decks, David in his adulterous act with Bethsheba, Ananias & Sapphira as they conspired to lie to God.
  - b. **1 Cor. 4:5**

### III. Last Illustration is that of THE DEATH OF EZEKIEL'S WIFE. **Ezek. 24 (16-18)**

A. Unlike 2 previous illustrations, this one = very personal to the E.

1. His wife shall die!!! (They were very close to each other, *the desire of his eyes vs. 15*)
2. E. would not cry before others. No sackcloth – he would dress as if nothing had happened!
  - a. No covering of the lip (instinctively done in tragedy or sorrow).
  - b. *Eat not bread of men* = mourners' bread (Cf. Taking food to bereaved & they refuse it at door.)
3. **24:19** Why such strange behavior?

B. **24:20-24** The captive Jews would one day do just like Ezekiel.

1. Jews still in Jeru. were soon to be slaughtered. Comrades in exile would show no open mourning.
  - a. Why not? Prob. because that would have incited the wrath of Babylonian captors.
  - b. Due to Zedekiah's revolt, exiled Jews suspected as potential rebels, too. (H.L. Ellison, p. 47).
2. When these things came to pass, Jewish exiles would know that God's hand was in it, via illustra.

C. Lesson: A lesson in Personal Commitment.

1. We pity E. as stood over fresh grave of wife, fighting back tears – according to God's instructions.
2. E. wasn't coldhearted. Vision of destru. of Jeru. (**9:8**) caused him to break down.
3. Ex. like this = interesting & inspiring. (e.g. → going to church June 13, 1999 – day after Dad died)
4. E. commitment says, *Neither grief nor blessing, not trial nor recreation, not riches nor poverty shall keep me from worshipping & serving my Lord.*
5. Personal commitment is what is needed **because** we will be judged as individuals, **Ezek.18:20c**
6. **Will we be His friend like Abraham, committed like Paul, obedient like Ezek. in midst of grief?**

Concl.

A. Ezek. = God's artist-illustrator prophet.

1. He lived when people wouldn't come hear his sermons, so he took the lessons to them thru illustra.
2. When he finished his 20-22 yrs. of prophetic work, the people *knew a prophet had been among them.* **Ezek. 33:33**

B. What do people see when @ you?

1. A person who exemplifies Christ? One deeply aware of the Lord's presence in their life? One with deep personal commitment to the Lord?
2. If you that is not what people see in your life, you need to know you can become more like Ezekiel this very moment, if you will obey the gospel right now.....

Card # 1

You are writing a gospel, A chapter each day;  
By deeds that you do, by words that you say;  
Men read what you write, whether faulty or true;  
Say, what is the Gospel according to you???

*(Making the Most of Life from A to Z,*  
by Leroy Brownlow, pg. 52)