

EZEKIEL

Cry Me a River

*By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down,
yea, we wept When we remembered Zion
Psalm 137:1*

Text

Ezekiel 1:25-2:10

Topic

The LORD describes Ezekiel's audience as rebels.

Title

"Rebels, Rebels, Your Nation's A Mess"

Kevin was understandably devastated.

Cowboy Dan wasn't coming to his birthday party after all. It was a pre-teen social embarrassment he would likely never recover from. "All the kids are gonna hate me," he whined. "It's gonna be just like little league."

Cowboy Dan didn't come... *But Cowboy Gil did!* AKA Steve Martin, he put on a hilarious performance in *Parenthood*.

Ezekiel got a surprise visit on his 30th birthday!

The LORD came to him on His throne-chariot, in a whirlwind, borne by four magnificent Cherubim.

The LORD brought Ezekiel a gift.

"Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me..." (2:2).

If you are in-Christ, God the Holy Spirit *entered* you the moment you were born-again. We call it His indwelling - His *permanent* indwelling.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 You Were Given The Gift of God The Holy Spirit On Your Born-Again Day**, and **#2 You Were Promised The Gifting(s) Of God The Holy Spirit On Your Born-again Day**.

#1 - You Were Given The Gift of God The Holy Spirit On Your Born-Again Day (1:25-28; 2:1-2)

Think for a moment: What is the best birthday gift you've ever received? It pales in comparison to God's gift to you.

The Holy Spirit is called "the *gift* of God in several places."¹ He is given to you, He enters you, when you believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ. And we say, based on biblical texts, His entering you is permanent.

On his 30th birthday, on the very day, the LORD surprised Ezekiel in a whirlwind, borne along on His cherried-out Cherubim chariot.

Ezk 1:25 A voice came from above the firmament that was over their heads; whenever they stood, they let down their wings.

Ezk 1:26 And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone...

What Ezekiel saw and experienced was the real. The thrones on Earth are the representations of the real that exists in the unseen, spiritual realm. When priests perform their tasks in the earthly Tabernacle & Temple, they "serve the **copy** and **shadow** of the **heavenly** things" (Hebrews 8:5).

If I told you I was looking at a custom car, and I said it had 'sick flames on the hood' would you speculate that it was a metaphor for the temporary nature of material things? "*Don't collect cars 'cause they are only going to burn!*" I guess you might if you'd never seen flames painted on a car. Chances are, however, you'd know exactly what I saw.

Ezk 1:26 And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it.

¹ Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; First Timothy 4:14; Second Timothy 1:6; Hebrews 6:4.

In the OT, when God is represented as a "man," we say it is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. Angels appear to mankind, too. It can be a little confusing because Jesus is sometimes called the Angel of the Lord. When the Person allows or commands worship, you can be certain it is Jesus.

Ezk 1:27 Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around.

The presence of God is luminous, radiant. So much so that, in the future city, the New Jerusalem, "the city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it."

I learned this week that, in the NT, there are only three nouns that are used to describe God: love, life & light.² *Everything else is an adjective or an office.* Any discussion of God must be subordinate to the understanding that God is love, God is life, God is light.

Ezk 1:28 Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. So when I saw *it*, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.

The rainbow is the sign of God's promise never to order-up a global flood. In His wrath against sin, God remembers mercy. The same will be true in the future Time of Jacob's Trouble. Though not directly mentioned here, the 7yrs of tribulation are suggested by the rainbow because the apostle John saw the LORD on His Throne in the Revelation, **with a rainbow**, just prior to judgment.

Ezekiel "fell on his face." I was asked recently if the Pentecostal practice of being slain in the Spirit could ever be genuine. Proponents point to people in the Bible who "fell down" before God. Many individuals in the Bible experienced a powerful, overwhelming encounter with God or His angels that caused them to fall or bow down: Abraham, Moses & Aaron, Joshua, Daniel, Balaam, Manoah & Mrs. Manoah, the apostle John, the apostle Paul, and Peter, James & John at the Mount of Transfiguration.

² So says Ben Witherington

Unless I am mistaken... These ALL "fell on their face" before God. They did not fall backward when someone touched their forehead, and their fall wasn't broken by the ushers.

The example I found of falling backward is the mob that came to arrest Jesus. He identified Himself as "I AM," and they fell backwards. *No ushers!*

Ezk 2:1 And He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you."
Ezk 2:2 Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me.

God the Holy Spirit did not indwell Ezekiel until this moment. In the Old Testament, there is no specific promise to believers that the Spirit of God would continually dwell in them. If God the Holy Spirit indwelt all OT believers, we wouldn't need to be told that he entered Ezekiel. And we wouldn't have any examples of His leaving a person; but we do.

Only after Jesus' death and resurrection could the Holy Spirit be given permanently.

In fact, the permanent indwelling of God the Holy Spirit is part of the New Covenant. The nation of Israel rejected Jesus in His first coming. The nation is under discipline. Israel is not enjoying the New Covenant. We are!

The Church has not replaced Israel, but the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant made with Israel have been extended to the Church. All believers today have the "law of God written on their hearts," and all believers know the Lord's presence in their lives.

#2 - You Were Promised Gifting(s) Of God The Holy Spirit On Your Born-Again Day (2:3-10)

The nation of Judah was made up of rebels without remorse.

"Rebellious," or "rebelled" appear 7x in these few verses. The LORD also describes them as "transgressed," "impudent," and "stubborn."

Despite their rejection of Him, *God would not abandon them.*

Ezk 2:3 And He said to me: "Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a **rebellious** nation that has **rebelled** against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.

"Son of Adam" is the literal translation. In the plural it was a synonym for mankind. Daniel would elevate the title to refer to the Jewish Messiah. Jesus used it of Himself some 80x. He was the son of Adam who was the Messiah.

- When the LORD called Jeremiah, he tried to beg off, saying he was too young.
- Isaiah found himself in Heaven and volunteered.
- Ezekiel needed no time to think or react. He hit the ground running.

Each of us is unique. We are going to *practice* being Christians differently. It is OK as long as we agree upon the essential doctrines. It's more than OK; it's healthy.

Ezk 2:4 For *they are* impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD."

Ezekiel was "sent," but not far away. He stayed put and ministered within the captive community.

The prophets of the Bible mostly shared unpopular messages. They were messages of hope, of truth, of eternity. But in order to unlock those things there needed to be repentance.

Our message is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is glorious. But it is mostly unpopular when it is properly preached because it involves, you guessed it, a call for repentance. "Thus says the Lord God." A prophet was always under a death sentence. It was a capital crime to speak falsely for God.

Ezk 2:5 As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse - for they *are* a rebellious house - yet they will know that a prophet has been among them.

Every person who hears God's Word has a *personal responsibility* to accept Him or to reject Him. God the Holy Spirit accompanies the Word in such a way that the sinners heart is able to respond.

I'm sorry, but if mankind does not have free will, God has already determined who will hear and who will refuse. Cornelius Van Til writes, "The moment a Christian theologian admits that **anything** happens in the whole course of history, whether by devil, or

man, or power of nature, without the will of God, that moment the foundations of a Christian theology are shaken." I might want to believe that... But then I remember God is love, life, and light. He therefore cannot be the cause of evil.

Those who do not have the written Word, never heard the name of Jesus, they have the witness of creation around them, and conscience within them. They are responsible to act upon what they know, **not** what they don't know.

Ezk 2:6 "And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns *are* with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they *are* a rebellious house.

Ezekiel's ministry would take place in an urban setting. But the spiritual landscape would seem like a desert.

Are you familiar with the phrase *mad-dogging*? It's that intense stare that someone full of rage has. Boxers & MMA fighters exhibit it at their weigh-ins. Ezekiel could expect to be mad dogged!

Ezk 2:7 You shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse, for they *are* rebellious.

For the third time, the Lord emphasizes personal responsibility. He was also encouraging Ezekiel that the success of his ministry would be measured in faithfulness, not by numbers.

Ezk 2:8 But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Do not be rebellious like that rebellious house...

Our lives and our ministries need constant evaluation. We often point out that of the seven letters to the seven churches in the book of the revelation only one of them is without correction or reproof. It's the one to the church that is suffering intense persecution.

- We do not want to be rebellious like the churches in Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, & Laodicea.
- We do not want to be rebellious like the church in Corinth.

Ezk 2:8 But you, son of man... open your mouth and eat what I give you."

The Word of God isn't for others until it's become part of you. Ezekiel must 'digest' God's Word.

Do you think he ate it? Absolutely. It is going to be the least weird thing that Ezekiel does as he dramatizes God's Word.

Ezk 2:9 Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it.

Ezk 2:10 Then He spread it before me; and *there was* writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it *were* lamentations and mourning and woe.

The majority of prophetic messages were delivered during times of disobedience, decline, or impending judgment. Makes sense because God truly loves His special nation. He would always go after them, never abandon them, and be faithful to discipline them.

Mary Poppins' travels with a carpet bag from which she can pull out a seemingly endless number of objects, no matter the size or quantity, that are just right for her need.

God the Holy Spirit is an ocean of resources. I'll mention a few of His more well-known giftings:

- ☞ He is involved in your regeneration (your new birth).
- ☞ He is involved in your baptism into the body of Jesus, in your being sealed, in your being adopted, in your being filled.
- ☞ The spiritual fruit in your life is the Fruit of the Holy Spirit.
- ☞ He is your teacher, guide, and comforter. He intercedes for you. '
- ☞ He is the down payment guaranteeing God's promises.
- ☞ God the Holy Spirit gives you the assurance of salvation.

Jesus in His first coming is described as "being in the form of God, [He] did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. And being found in

appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:6-8).

Jesus was fully God and fully man. In His first coming, He set aside the independent use of deity. He lived as a man who was indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He didn't sometimes take back His deity to answer a question, or to perform a healing. He lived as a Spirit-indwelt human.

A commentator paraphrased Jesus: "The Spirit I'm going to send to you... **You've seen Him in Me.** You've seen Him dwelling in My life these past three years. He has been with you in Me. And it's that very same Spirit who has been with you in Me, on My life, indwelling Me these years, that is the Holy Spirit I'm going to ask the Father to send to you."

With that in mind, listen to these words of the apostle Paul: "It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, He'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to Himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and He does, as surely as He did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's! (Romans 8:11 MSG).

In the classic SyFy series, *Quantum Leap*, Sam has 'jumped' into the body of a woman who is being abducted. Al, who appears only to him as a hologram, reminds Sam he has a black belt in Tae Kwon Do. With that realization, Sam subdues the attackers.

If you are a believer, God, the Holy Spirit permanently entered you. You need to be reminded. Otherwise your flesh will reassert itself and you find yourself walking in that energy rather than by the dynamic power & enabling of God.