

The WordSeekers : XtremeXplorationSundays

Bible-Study Notes

June 5, 2005

“Taking On a Tough Task” Or, “When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Get Going”

"When the situation gets critical, those who aren't weak-willed work harder and never give up. The proverb is attributed to Joseph P. Kennedy (1888-1969), the father of (U.S.) President John F. Kennedy. It was recently popularized by Billy Ocean's song 'When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Get Going' (1986).

FOCAL VERSES: Ezekiel 1: 1 – 3:27

Observation ‘Satellite-Level’ Ezekiel Chapters: 1 – 48: A flyover

The Book:

- One of 4 Major Prophet books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel)
- Written while in a foreign land (Babylon)
- Contains the phrase, 'son of man,' 93 times.
- Contains the phrase, 'that you may know that I am the Lord,' 50 times.
- Contains symbolism, visions, dramatic object lessons.
 - Lying on his side for 390 days eating only one 8 ounce meal/day cooked over manure
 - Shaving of his head and beard
 - Showing no sorrow when his wife died—the same day the city of Jerusalem was taken.
 - 'Dry bones'
 - Israelites compared to two prostitute sisters.

The Author:

- Means, 'God is strong' or 'God strengthens.' The basic message of his book.
- A priest, born of a priestly family
- Was a 'street preacher' while in Babylon
- Had Daniel, Jeremiah, Habakkuk as contemporaries
- Was 'the watchman for the house of Israel.'
- Lived what he preached. (walked-the talk)
- Served as a prophet from 593 – 571 B. C.
- Described as a "fiery, ecstatic prophet, legalist, ritualistic priest, sympathetic pastor, imaginative artist, flamboyant preacher, and stern disciplinarian."

The Audience:

- Fellow captives in Babylon
- Fellow countrymen still in Judea

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The Setting:

- Ezekiel was among those taken captive during the 2nd siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (597 B. C.) Daniel was taken in the 1st siege in 605 B. C.
- Dates in the book are relative to his date of captivity (597 B. C.)
- 1st prophecy dated 593 B. C.

The Message:

Ezekiel was adamant in his messages to his countrymen regarding their disrespect and dishonoring of the name of Yahweh. Note, the use of the phrase—‘that you may know that I am the Lord’—50 times.

While condemning those who still were ‘hardhearted to God,’ he emphasized ‘individual responsibility.’ (18: 1 – 3)

He took on the tough task of preaching to a crowd that still believed that Jerusalem would not fall and that they would be returning to their land very soon. (Recall the false prophet Hananiah predicted that the captives ‘would return within two years.’)

The last portion of his book deals with the restoration process—the return and rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem.

Three Main Sections:

1. Messages of Doom (1 – 24:27)
2. Messages Against Foreign Nations (25:1 – 32:32)
3. Messages of Hope (33:1 – 48:35)

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Life Application: Accepting the Challenges God Presents to Us.

“Go now ... speak to them. Say to them ‘this is what the Lord says,’ whether they listen or fail to listen.” Ezekiel 3: 10, 11, NLT

Challenge #1:

- To know Him better through a clearer understanding of His Word.
 - “As a result, I can really know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I can learn what it means to suffer with him, sharing in his death,”
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Challenge #2:

- To have influence on others—both Christians and non-believers. Be ‘difference-makers’ for the Lord. Romans 12: 3 - 5

“As God’s messenger, I give each of you this warning: Be honest in your estimate of yourselves, measuring your value by how much faith God has given you.

Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are all parts of his one body, and each of us has different work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.”

Challenge #3:

- To view life, not as a series of problems, but as a continuum of kingdom opportunities.
 - “Be glad for all God is planning for you. Be patient in trouble, and always be prayerful.” Romans 12:12, NLT

SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Acting as God’s New Creation Ephesians 2:10
2. Our Walk in Public Life Colossians 4: 5, 6
3. Instruction Toward Fellow Believers 1 Thessalonians 5: 11
4. Guide to Holy Living 1 Thessalonians 5: 12 - 22