

# The WordSeekers : XtremeXplorationSundays Bible-Study Notes

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June 12, 2005

## “Living By the Lord’s Values” Or, “Making The Main Thing, the main thing”

Going back to Ezekiel 3: 16 – 21...

In 3:17, God makes Ezekiel “the watchman for the house of Israel.”

In vv. 18 – 21, God says that Ezekiel is to be held personally accountable to both the wicked and the righteous warning them of their evil ways and the pending judgment from God.

God says that if Ezekiel does warn them, no matter whether they change their ways or not, He will not hold Ezekiel accountable. But, if Ezekiel does NOT warn them and they continue in their evil ways, God WILL hold Ezekiel accountable to his death, just like the persons not changing their ways.

Refer to Matthew 28: 19, 20: Jesus told His disciples to, “Go, therefore, and make disciples...”

He is holding us accountable and our rewards in heaven will be based on what we do to further His kingdom.

### **Background (review from previous lesson)**

#### **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 dried cow dung
  - 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:**

- Ezekiel mimed the symbolic acts as instructed by God. He was to speak only when God wanted him to give the people a message.
- 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

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- 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

### The Setting:

- Ezekiel was among those taken captive during the 2<sup>nd</sup> siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (597 B. C.) Daniel was taken in the 1<sup>st</sup> siege in 605 B. C.
- Dates in the book are relative to his date of captivity (597 B. C.)
- 1<sup>st</sup> 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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**FOCAL VERSES: Ezekiel 7: 1 – 2; 15 – 16; 19 - 27**

**Observation**     ‘Satellite-Level’ Ezekiel Chapters: 4 – 11: A flyover

Chapters 4 - 5: Ezekiel's Symbolic Acts

Chapters 6 – 7: (6) the Destruction of the High Places; (7) Description of the Babylon Conquest

Chapters 8 – 11: Departure of God's Glory

**Chapter 4 - 5: Four Symbolic Actions:**

**#1:** God commanded Ezekiel to dramatize the siege by Babylon on the city of Jerusalem by taking a soft clay brick and drawing a map of the city on it. He was to put in place all the factors associated with a siege, such as wall, ramp, military camps, and battering rams. (Imagine playing ‘soldier’ as a boy)

Symbolism: the fall of the city of Jerusalem

**#2:**

God instructed Ezekiel to lie on his left side for 390 days (dates this back to the time of the Judges) and then to lie on his right side for 40 days (timeframe immediately preceding Judah's exile).

Symbolism: 390 on the left side represents the Northern Kingdom; 40 years the Southern Kingdom. The length of time suggests the number of years God tolerated their sins before judgment was to fall.

**#3:**

Ezekiel was to eat a very limited amount of bread and water while lying on his sides. He was to cook the bread over dried cow dung

Symbolism: the scarcity of food during the coming siege.

4:9: “Ezekiel Bread” available in stores

**#4:**

Ezekiel was to cut his hair and beard with a sword and to divide the hair into three equal piles.

Pile 1—burn it

Pile 2—cut into pieces with his sword

Pile 3—toss into the wind

However, he was to put a few strands in his robe for safe keeping.

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Symbolism: The consequences of warfare would fall on the people in the form of pestilence, famine and battles, but a few (the remnant) would be spared.

### Chapter 8 - 11:

#### Chapter 8: Idols/idolatry inside the temple

Ezekiel is taken to Jerusalem in a vision to look at the **idolatry** of the people in the temple. Ezekiel is utterly amazed at what he sees.

1. an idol at the northern gate in the inner court
2. paintings on the wall
3. women weeping for Tammuz (Babylonian fertility god)
4. 25 men 'with their backs to the temple ... worshipping the sun...'

God then shows to Ezekiel how He, God, will show Himself

#### Chapter 9: Judgment of the Wicked

A 'man clothed in linen' is to put a mark on the foreheads of those who deplore the actions of the idolaters. He is to slay the others with his sword—man, woman and child.

Ezekiel cries over this act of judgment by God and asks God if He is going to destroy the remnant also.

God says He is not spare the wicked.

#### Chapter 10: Departure of the Glory of God

V18—"Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple ..."

#### Chapter 11: Further Judgment but with Hope

Vision of the 25 wicked rulers who are to be destroyed.

vv. 13 – 20—"Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh,

that they may walk in My statutes and keep my judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God."

Reference Jeremiah 31: 31 – 34, focus on v. 33

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## Life Application:

"[Idolatry is] not only the adoration of images, but also trust in one's own righteousness, works and merits, and putting confidence in riches and power."

Martin Luther

"Idolatry is " identifying God with our own particular system and beliefs."

Albert Mollegen

The words I associate with idolatry are 'loyalty' or 'passion.'

Loyalty to:

Job

money

hobbies

Family

Friends

TV

food

home

phys. appearance

athletics

reading

Internet