

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Ezekiel 4 & 5

11/4/15

Ezekiel 4

Siege of Jerusalem Symbolized

¹ "Now, son of man, take a block of clay, put it in front of you and draw the city of Jerusalem on it.² Then lay siege to it: Erect siege works against it, build a ramp up to it, set up camps against it and put battering rams around it.³ Then take an iron pan, place it as an iron wall between you and the city and turn your face toward it. It will be under siege, and you shall besiege it. This will be a sign to the people of Israel.

⁴ "Then lie on your left side and put the sin of the people of Israel upon yourself. You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side.⁵ I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the people of Israel.

⁶ "After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the people of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year.⁷ Turn your face toward the siege of Jerusalem and with bared arm prophesy against her.⁸ I will tie you up with ropes so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have finished the days of your siege.

4:1-17 Ezekiel acted out the coming siege and fall of Jerusalem before it actually happened. God gave Ezekiel specific instructions about what to do and say and how to do and say it. Each detail had a specific meaning. Often we ignore or disregard the smaller details of God's Word, thinking God probably doesn't care. Like Ezekiel, we should want to obey God completely, even in the details.

4:4-17 Ezekiel's unusual actions symbolically portrayed the fate of Jerusalem. He lay on his left side for 390 days to show that Israel would be punished for 390 years; then he lay on his right side for 40 days to show that Judah would be punished for 40 years. Ezekiel was not allowed to move, symbolizing the fact that the people of Jerusalem would be imprisoned within the walls of the city. We know that Ezekiel did not have to lie on his side all day because these verses tell of other tasks God asked him to do during this time. The small amount of food he was allowed to eat represented the normal ration provided to those living in a city under siege by enemy armies. The food that was to be cooked over dried human excrement was a symbol of Judah's spiritual uncleanness. Certainly many people saw these spectacles and, in the process, heard Ezekiel's occasional speeches (3:27). How many would be willing to so dramatically portray the sins of our nation? We need to pray for greater boldness in our witness.

Verses 9-16

⁹ "Take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt; put them in a storage jar and use them to make bread for yourself. You are to eat it during the 390 days you lie on your side.¹⁰ Weigh out twenty shekels of food to eat each day and eat it at set times.¹¹ Also

measure out a sixth of a hin of water and drink it at set times. ¹² Eat the food as you would a loaf of barley bread; bake it in the sight of the people, using human excrement for fuel." ¹³ The LORD said, "In this way the people of Israel will eat defiled food among the nations where I will drive them." ¹⁴ Then I said, "Not so, Sovereign LORD! I have never defiled myself. From my youth until now I have never eaten anything found dead or torn by wild animals. No impure meat has ever entered my mouth." ¹⁵ "Very well," he said, "I will let you bake your bread over cow dung instead of human excrement." ¹⁶ He then said to me: "Son of man, I am about to cut off the food supply in Jerusalem. The people will eat rationed food in anxiety and drink rationed water in despair, ¹⁷ for food and water will be scarce. They will be appalled at the sight of each other and will waste away because of their sin.

4:12-14 Ezekiel asked God not to make him use human excrement for fuel because it violated the laws for purity (Leviticus 21-22; Deuteronomy 23:12-14). As a priest, Ezekiel would have been careful to keep all these laws. To use human excrement for fuel would paint a dramatic picture of ruin. If nothing was left in the city that could be burned, it would be impossible to continue to follow God's laws for sacrifices.

Ezekiel 5

God's Razor of Judgment

Verses 1-8

¹ "Now, son of man, take a sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor to shave your head and your beard. Then take a set of scales and divide up the hair. ² When the days of your siege come to an end, burn a third of the hair inside the city. Take a third and strike it with the sword all around the city. And scatter a third to the wind. For I will pursue them with drawn sword. ³ But take a few hairs and tuck them away in the folds of your garment. ⁴ Again, take a few of these and throw them into the fire and burn them up. A fire will spread from there to all Israel. ⁵ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. ⁶ Yet in her wickedness she has rebelled against my laws and decrees more than the nations and countries around her. She has rejected my laws and has not followed my decrees. ⁷ "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: You have been more unruly than the nations around you and have not followed my decrees or kept my laws. You have not even conformed to the standards of the nations around you. ⁸ "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself am against you, Jerusalem, and I will inflict punishment on you in the sight of the nations. ⁹ Because of all your detestable idols, I will do to you what I have never done before and will never do again. ¹⁰ Therefore in your midst parents will eat their children, and children will eat their parents. I will inflict punishment on you and will scatter all your survivors to the winds.

5:1-10 Shaving one's head and beard signified mourning, humiliation, and repentance. God told Ezekiel to shave his head and beard and then to divide the hair into three parts, symbolizing what was going to happen to the people in Jerusalem (see 5:12). Along with verbal prophecies, God asked Ezekiel to use dramatic visual images to command the people's attention and to burn an indelible impression on their minds. Just as God gave Ezekiel creative ways to communicate his message to the exiles, we can creatively communicate the Good News about God to a lost generation.

5:3-4 The few strands of hair Ezekiel put in his garment symbolized the small remnant of faithful people whom God would preserve. But even some from this remnant would be judged and destroyed because their faith was not genuine. Where will you stand in the coming judgment? Matthew 7:22-23 warns that many who believe they are safe are not. Make sure your commitment to the Lord is genuine and heartfelt.

5:7 The people's wickedness was so great that they couldn't even be compared favorably with the pagan nations around them, not to mention how they would appear against the measuring stick of God's laws.

Verses 11-17

¹¹ Therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your vile images and detestable practices, I myself will shave you; I will not look on you with pity or spare you. ¹² A third of your people will die of the plague or perish by famine inside you; a third will fall by the sword outside your walls; and a third I will scatter to the winds and pursue with drawn sword. ¹³ "Then my anger will cease and my wrath against them will subside, and I will be avenged. And when I have spent my wrath on them, they will know that I the LORD have spoken in my zeal. ¹⁴ "I will make you a ruin and a reproach among the nations around you, in the sight of all who pass by. ¹⁵ You will be a reproach and a taunt, a warning and an object of horror to the nations around you when I inflict punishment on you in anger and in wrath and with stinging rebuke. I the LORD have spoken. ¹⁶ When I shoot at you with my deadly and destructive arrows of famine, I will shoot to destroy you. I will bring more and more famine upon you and cut off your supply of food. ¹⁷ I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will leave you childless. Plague and bloodshed will sweep through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I the LORD have spoken."

5:11 It was a serious sin to defile the temple, God's sanctuary, by worshiping idols and practicing evil within its very walls. In the New Testament, we learn that God now makes his home within those who are his. Our bodies are God's temple (see 1 Corinthians 6:19). We defile God's temple today by allowing gossiping, bitterness, love of money, lying, or any other wrong actions or attitudes to be a part of our lives. By asking the Holy Spirit's help, we can keep from defiling his temple.

5:13 Have you ever seen someone try to discipline a child by saying, "If you do that one more time . . ."? If the parent doesn't follow through, the child learns not to listen. Empty threats backfire. God was going to punish the Israelites for their blatant sins, and he wanted them to know that he would do what he said. The people learned the hard way that God always follows through on his word. Too many people ignore God's warnings, treating them as empty threats. But what God threatens, he does. Don't make the mistake of thinking God doesn't really mean what he says.