

Sermon 29 May 2022

Glory of the Lord is no longer in the temple, but is experienced in Babylon

Unable to be ordained as a priest in the temple, Ezekiel is commissioned by God to be a prophet

At the reception of the vision, Ezekiel falls on his face.

When I saw him [risen and exalted Jesus], I fell at his feet as though dead.

“Son of man” == “human person” Emphasis on difference between God and the human person. Ezekiel will be God’s prophet.

The problem with Israel is that they are a rebellious people. It is this attitude of rebellion that leads to specific acts of rebellion such as the worship of idols, immoral sexual acts, etc.

God also describes the people as being “impudent and stubborn”. Again we see a stepping back from specific actions to their cause.

Duty versus want. Preacher talking that we should do things because we want to do them rather than we do it out of duty. It would be great if God’s will equates with what I want, but it often doesn’t.

The Call

1.28 Ezekiel has a vision of the glory of the Lord, not in the temple, but by the Chebar canal in Babylon. The dread and awe inspired by the vision cause Ezekiel to fall forward on his face. Now, no longer seeing he hears.

2.1

The voice addresses him as “Son of man”. Not like Jesus’s self designation – connected to the divine being in the Book of Daniel. Here it is equivalent to “Human person”. God is not human.

¹⁹ God is not a man, that he should lie,
or a son of man, that he should change his mind.

Has he said, and will he not do it?

Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? ¹

³ O Lord, what is man that you regard him,
or the son of man that you think of him?

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Nu 23:19). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

⁴ Man is like a breath;
his days are like a passing shadow.²

The voice instructs Ezekiel to stand.

2.2

The impact of the vision is so powerful that Ezekiel is unable to obey this command but is stood up through the Spirit, that same spirit that moved the divine chariot in the vision. Name Ezekiel means “God strengthens”. It looks like Ezekiel does not have much choice in what happens

2.3-4

God is sending him (God’s call is better described as God’s sending)

²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”³

Our word mission is derived from the latin missio – which is the act of sending.

Ezekiel is sent to his own people, but God describes them as “nations of rebels” - nations word used to describe heathen nations. Two pairs of words are used to describe the people of Israel. They have “**rebelled** against me” and “they (and their fathers) have **transgressed** against me”. Broader descriptions than just the acts, they denote a whole attitude of rebellion.

In our confession we can all to mind specific acts but do we repent of the underlying attitudes and stances that cause us to do those acts.

Furthermore God describes them as impudent and stubborn

The parents “transgressed.” The children are “impudent” and “stiff-hearted.” Reverence cannot long outlive obedience. The conscience which is roughly used loses its sensitiveness and becomes harsh and callous, like the skin of the hand that works with rough materials. Thus the worst sin is least acknowledged, and the greatest sinner most impenitent.⁴

2.4-7

Rather than being ordained as a priest – one who represents the people to God – Ezekiel is to be commissioned as a prophet - you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’⁵ He is to speak God’s words to the people. As God’s word has been rejected by the people, so they will reject God’s word spoken through his prophet.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Ps 144:3–4). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Jn 20:21). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

⁴ Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Ezekiel](#) (Vol. 1, p. 33). Funk & Wagnalls Company.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Eze 2:4). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

Sin is not just acts but a condition – the people are rebellious,

Pannenberg “the dissolution of the traditional doctrine of sin, especially the idea of original sin,” and plausibly suggests that “the decay of the doctrine” has led to anchoring the concept of sin in “acts of sin,” finally “reduced to the *individual* act.”⁶

Even up to the late 1960s churches and liturgies were producing forms of confessions of sin that in effect redefined sin as mistaken acts, failures, or falling short this reintroduced unwittingly a *moralistic* understanding of sin by the back door. In biblical traditions the whole human condition is involved, including misdirected desire and the disruption of a relationship with God.⁷

The modern tendency is to apply the word “sin” to sinful acts rather than to the sinful condition that leads to those acts.

⁵ And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”⁸

Prevailing sins:

Rebellion:

Move away from obedience as a primary response to God, and replacing it with our own ideas of right and wrong, even substituting worship for obedience.

Bonhoeffer:

In our day, our prevailing sin may well be self-centredness when we should be God centred.

Self identification has become the norm. I am who I want to be or feel I am. The self has become a god.

Original sin is the fact that we are self-centred rather than God-centred. Our world revolves around my need and wants, rather than around what God requires.

³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.”⁹

⁶ Thiselton, A. C. (2007). [*The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*](#) (p. 257). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

⁷ Thiselton, A. C. (2007). [*The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*](#) (p. 257). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

⁸ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Is 6:4–5). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

⁹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Mk 8:34–35). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

Sin is not just about individual acts, which of course, it includes, but about a range of ways of living.

The Commissioning

2.8-3.3

Ezekiel's commissioning takes the form of eating a scroll full of words – presumably the prophecies that he will later give. They are “words of lamentation and mourning and woe”¹⁰

First he is not to rebel against the mission God is giving. Most unpleasant task. Often true for those who stand up for God's truth. Because the words are God's words they taste sweet.

¹⁰³ How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth! ¹¹

⁸ Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, “Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.” ⁹ So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, “Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.” ¹⁰ And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. ¹¹ And I was told, “You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.” ¹²

Contents:

Lamentations - funeral song written in a specific meter in Hebrew poetry and sung in times of bereavement¹³

Mourning - referred to the words and moans uttered by a bereaved family and by professional mourners employed to mourn the death of a loved one¹⁴

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Eze 2:10). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Ps 119:103). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Re 10:8–11). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

¹³ Cooper, L. E. (1994). [Ezekiel](#) (Vol. 17, p. 78). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

¹⁴ Cooper, L. E. (1994). [Ezekiel](#) (Vol. 17, p. 78). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Woes - an exclamation of distress at a great loss of any kind. God prepares Ezekiel for rejection. The success of the mission is not how many people are impacted but whether we are faithful.

Although they are stubborn – which in their instance is a criticism, God has made Ezekiel even more stubborn than them – which is positive.

Comment

How would you feel if you were to be given such an assignment?

In some ways, those of us who have had to oppose the Anglican Provinces move to change its doctrine on marriage have felt the pain of going against the majority of the leadership of that part of the church. I remember over hearing someone talking about me when I felt compelled to speak out about the Auckland Diocese promoting this change on marriage. He used to be such a nice person.

God's Response and Ezekiel's Response

3.12-13

At the conclusion of Ezekiel's commissioning God reminds Ezekiel who he is in a display of glory and transports a very reluctant Ezekiel to those to whom God has sent him.

Ezekiel is utterly distraught at what he has been commanded to do.

The Message and Ezekiel's Responsibility

3.16-21

God now warns Ezekiel about the consequences of failure on his part. Likens him to a watchman on a tower looking out for the enemy.

Comment

What happens to us if we fail to do what God requires of us? What if we fail to proclaim the Gospel in its fullness?

The Restrictions on the Prophet

3.22-23

Third time Ezekiel experiences the glory of God. Now it involves the restrictions that Ezekiel will experience in the Fulfilment of his call.

He will only be able to leave his house when God tells him to, and he will be able to speak the words that God will give.

3.26-27

Temptation is to make the message more acceptable. Add one's own words to the message.

We can do the same with the Gospel. Leave the parts of the Gospel we don't like. Or add things in that make it more attractive.

Comment

What restrictions do we have if we are to fulfil the mission that God has given us?

Financial. Sunday attendance may restrict our involvement in sport and other social activities.

Conclusion

We are self-centred. We want a god who makes our lives comfortable. That's not the God of the Bible and there is no other God.

Bonhoeffer

The god we might to believe in, as Bonhoeffer says, a god who is better than the God who is revealed in Scripture, is simply an idol that we have made for ourselves.

Secondly, living within a self-centred society, we can make the self, our desires, our wants, our opinions, into a god or idol that determines every aspect of our lives.

The alternative is to become God-centred. To see that obedience to God is the essence of our lives. To no longer be conformed to pattern of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.