

Ezekiel's Enactments

The opening verses of the book of Hebrews describes how that “God, who at sundry times *and in divers manners* spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets ...” (Heb. 1:1). The prophecy of Ezekiel is an example of such revelations: through him, the message of God was revealed in very different manners, in both the literal speaking of words, and the enactment of living parables. Both were diverse manners by which the purpose of Yahweh was made known, as the nation was warned of coming judgments, and for the purpose of our exhortation today, we propose to examine the living parables that Ezekiel enacted.

EATING THE SCROLL

Ezekiel chapter 3 describes how that in vision the prophet was shown a scroll, which he was required to eat, and he found that “it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness”. A scroll is representative of written words, and the spirit of this enactment is shown by Jeremiah, when the Word was discovered in the temple:

“Thy words were found, *and I did eat them*; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart ...” (Jer. 15:16).

Again, the Psalmist described likewise:

“how sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psa. 110:103)”.

This describes the delight of those who seek after the righteousness of Yahweh: they consume His Word with relish, finding it sweet and enjoyable to consume. But the effect of the word was bitter. So John found, when he, like Ezekiel was caused to eat a scroll:

“And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten of it, my belly was bitter” (Rev. 10:10).

And again, in the case of Ezekiel:

“I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit” (Ezek. 3:14).

Though the eating of the Word is sweet and delightful to the faithful, when digested it causes bitterness to the works of evil committed by those around us. Our belly becomes bitter against the rising of the Apostasy, seen by both John and Ezekiel, and we long for the time when it shall be swept away by the judgments of God.

EATING DEFILED BREAD

The second enactment involved Ezekiel drawing a representation of Jerusalem on a clay tile, under siege. He was to take an iron pan to enact the siege, and was to lie on his left side, then his right side for a prescribed number of days, to represent the days

of the siege. There are difficulties in how this actually worked: Ezekiel was to lie on his left side for 390 days, and then on his right side for 40 days. How this was physically possible has given rise to a number of suggestions. Of course, it was within the power of Yahweh for him to permit it – indeed He states: “behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege: (Ezek. 4:8). It has been suggested that this was not literally carried out: it was only in vision. Or again, that he only had to lie on his side during the day, and was able to go home in the evening. It seems most probable however, that the record is as read, and that Yahweh ensured he could not turn from one side to another for the required lengths of time, representing the number of years of iniquity.

During this time, Ezekiel was to eat defiled food. He was to make bread of 5 types of grain, and eat it by measure. “thou shalt eat it with barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight” (Ezek. 4:12). But following the prophets protest, cow dung was substituted for man’s dung instead. The poor of the land used to use dried cow dung as fuel to create a fire for heat and cooking, and Ezekiel was to similarly bake his food with dung, enacting how that Israel would eat defiled bread in their poverty, during the days of their captivity.

The prophet Hosea spoke of this:

“they shall not dwell in Yahweh’s land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and *they shall eat unclean things* in Assyria” (Hos. 9:3).

And again, our thoughts turn to Daniel in Babylon, who refused to defile himself with the king’s meat:

“Daniel purposed in his heart that *he would not defile himself* with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that *he might not defile himself*” (Dan. 1:8).

From eating the sweet honey of the Word, Ezekiel turned to eat defiled bread, typifying the experiences of his people.

CUT HAIR

Next, the prophet was required to cut the hair of his head and beard, and divide it into three parts. The first third was to be burned on the tile upon which he had drawn Jerusalem’s siege, the second was to be cut up with a knife, and the third was to be scattered to the wind, each describing how the people would fare in the judgment to come. Interestingly, Ezekiel, as a priest, was not ordinarily permitted to cut his hair, or beard:

“they shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh” (Lev. 21:6)

And interestingly, the context in this place is how the priests were not to defile themselves with a dead body, or any other means (vs 4).

The cutting of hair featured in the Nazarite vow, in the event of being defiled by contact with a dead body (Num. 6). Here, the vow was interrupted, the hair was cut, and the duration of the vow had to begin again, with the days that were before being “lost”. So, Israel’s vow to be Yahweh’s people was interrupted by their defilement, the days being lost, and they would have to start again.

THE HOLE IN THE WALL

Next, Ezekiel was shown a hole in the wall of the temple:

“... he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in ...” (Ezek. 8:7-8).

There are a number of points here: Firstly, the wall had been breached. It had a hole in it, and as Ezekiel looked in, he saw “the wicked abominations that they do here”. Evidently, the wicked abominations had entered through this hole, as the door was covered over, and the hole was the only other means of entrance. The wall of separation between the holy and profane had been breached. Ezekiel, however, did not enter through the hole, he dug and found the door. The words of our Master come to mind:

“Verily verily I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber ... I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved ...” (Jno. 10:1, 9).

In these words, we have a powerful exhortation: we must guard the ecclesial walls, ensuring they do not become breached by the thieves and robbers who would make a spoil of the holy people. The only legitimate entrance into the House of God is the door – which is Christ. Though the door may be obscured by the bricks of apostasy, for those who are willing to dig, it can be found, and entrance granted to the seeker, like it was for Ezekiel.

THE JUDGMENT BEGINS

In Ezekiel chapter 9, the prophet is shown a vision of 6 armed men, with a seventh in their midst with an inkhorn instead of a weapon. The commandment is given thus:

“Yahweh said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in my hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity ... Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house (Ezek. 9:4-5, 6).

So, there were two aspects performed: the marking out of those who would be spared in the judgment first, and then the actual performance of the judgments themselves. The man with the inkhorn evidently represents the prophets, who sought to impress

into the thinking of men and women the principles of the holiness of Yahweh. The allusion is to the High Priest under the Law, who wore a golden plate on his forehead, containing the words: "Holiness to Yahweh" (Ezek 28:36). This should have been at the foremost of the nations thinking, and for those whose minds were so marked with the inkhorn, they would escape the judgments. Revelation chapter 7 again speaks of those who were "sealed" in their foreheads, with the symbolic number of the sealed being an hundred and forty four thousand. The exhortation for us is obvious: we need to imbibe within our mind-set the principles of Yahweh's righteousness. "the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? (1 Pet. 4:17). Let us therefore, allow the divine ink-horn to so operate upon our thinking that we might be delivered from the wrath to come.

STUFF FOR REMOVING

Next, Ezekiel was to prepare "stuff for removing", as if he were going to leave home in haste. He was to do it in the sight of all the people:

"Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity" (Eze. 12:3-4).

The application is obvious: the prophet was commanded: "Say, I am your sign," and he enacted what the people would themselves do at the appointed day when they would be carried away captive.

An interesting feature that arises in this enactment, is that when the events were to actually take place, we are told of the consequence: "***and they shall know that I am Yahweh***" (verse 15). Again in the next verse, speaking of the remnant it is said: "and they shall know that I am Yahweh". In fact, this phrase occurs over 65 times in the prophesy of Ezekiel, being a major theme there.

By contrast, Jeremiah spoke of those who would have men forget the Name of Yahweh, speaking of the false prophets:

"... yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; ***which think to cause my people to forget my name*** by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal" (Jer. 23:27).

Interestingly, the word "baal" is often translated "lord". In other words, the people were encouraged to forget the name Yahweh, for "lord" instead. In a similar fashion, in our Bibles, where the name occurs in the Hebrew text (well over six thousand times), it has been removed in translation, and substituted with "LORD" and "GOD," both wholly inaccurate terms. In our day, there are those who seek to suppress the use of the Father's Name, for Baal.

SIGHING

We have already seen the example of those who “sigh and cry” for the abominations committed in the house of Yahweh, and now Ezekiel himself is to identify himself with such a spirit:

“Sigh therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of thy loins; and with bitterness sigh before their eyes. And it shall be, when they shall say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? That thou shalt answer, For the tidings; because it cometh and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass, saith Adonai Yahweh” (Ezek. 21:6-7).

Another translation has it: “groan with an aching heart and bitterness” (NET), such was the prophet’s anguish at what was coming upon his people. Notice that when pronouncing the evils to come upon Israel, Ezekiel was not in some sense detached from what he was prophesying in a state of objective indifference: he was deeply moved for his people, and sighed greatly for what was to come to pass. In that day, all hands would be made feeble, and all knees weak. In our day, this description is used to describe those who need help and encouragement to maintain a faithful journey towards the coming kingdom, and we are exhorted to strengthen them. In the context of receiving chastisement at the hand of Yahweh, we are told:

“Wherefore *lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees*; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way ...” (Heb. 12:13).

Rather than to become discouraged at the things coming upon the world – and the house of God – we ought rather to strengthen each other in the days that remain.

THE BOILING POT

In Ezekiel chapter 24, the prophet is to boil flesh in a pot, “every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder” and “the choice bones”. Then, he takes the flesh out, and leaves the scum in the empty pot to burn upon the fire: “then set it empty upon the coals thereof that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the scum of it may be consumed” (Ezek. 24:11).

There is an apparent allusion here to the words of the people in chapter 11: “It is not near; let us build houses: this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh” (Ezek. 11:3). The boiling pot then, is Jerusalem, and the contents the people, members of the Israelitish carcass that was being boiled by the fire of the wrath of God. The best of the people (evidently the king’s seed who were carried into captivity in the days of Daniel) were taken out of the Jerusalem pot to be carried elsewhere, that those who remained would be consumed upon the fire. These were the remnant left, who were also destroyed, that both the pot and the scum were burned in Divine judgment.

THE DEATH OF EZEKIEL'S WIFE

Each of the enactments so far, were to do with the people and nation which were to be judged. But now, things became closer to home for Ezekiel, as his wife was to be taken away from him:

“Son of man, behold, ***I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke:*** Yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the mourning: and ***at even my wife died;*** and I did in the morning as I was commanded” (Ezek. 24:15-18).

This enacted parable represented how that the people would have the desire of their eyes taken away from them:

“I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth ...” (Ezek. 24:21)

The desire of their eyes was that which they took pride in. Where the AV has “the excellency of your strength”, the RV has it: “the pride of your power”. The sanctuary was to be destroyed, and their house left to them desolate. There would be no time for a period of mourning, for they would be led away captive as soon as the city fell.

CONCLUSION

Before the first of these enactments, Ezekiel was struck dumb, being only able to speak the words given to him by Yahweh. But after the last one, he was able to speak once again, and this gave added importance to the things he spoke concerning each of the parables he was to enact. He prophesied in days immediately prior to the judgment of the people of Yahweh, who would be rewarded according to their ways. Similarly, we live in days immediately before the judgments of God shall be poured out – and as we have seen, the household of Christ shall be judged first. In each of the enactments, Ezekiel was a man of sign, not to the nations at large, but to the people of Judah particularly. We live in days when the people around us have scant regard for the things of the Truth, and so our remit is also to those members of the household of Christ. We individually are to be examples of how to live, enacting out the righteous principles of Yahweh, exhorting one another to faith and good works whilst the time remains. Let us then, heed the example of Ezekiel, and shine as lights in the midst of the household preparing each other for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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