

DEALING WITH REALITY

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Ezekiel 33:30-33

1. Ezekiel's twenty-two year ministry took place between 593 and 571 BC.
2. It took place during a difficult time in Judah's history.
 - a. Judah was experiencing God's judgment.
 - b. In 605 BC Nebuchadnezzar conquered the land and exiled Daniel and others to Babylon.
 - c. The Jews revolted against Babylon, and in 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar put down the revolt and exiled ten thousand more people to Babylon.
 - d. Ezekiel, a member of a prominent, priestly family, was exiled at this time.
 - e. Finally the Babylonians got fed up with the Jews, and in 586 BC they destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple.
3. Ezekiel prophesied in Babylon at the same time Jeremiah was prophesying in Jerusalem.
4. His message focused on judgment (1-32) until the Temple was destroyed at which time his theme changed to restoration (33-48).
5. Ezekiel knew from the beginning that his ministry would be a difficult one. 3:1-11
 - a. God told Ezekiel that the people would not listen to him even though they should. 3:5-7
 - b. They would not listen because they were stubborn (hardheaded) and obstinate (hardhearted).
 - c. God had uniquely prepared Ezekiel by making him more hardheaded than those he was speaking to. 3:8-9NOTE: Those who speak for God need to be determined, focused and mentally and emotionally tough.
7. Ezekiel's commission and calling were clearly communicated to him by God.

Ezek 3:10-11

10 Moreover, He said to me, "Son of man, take into your heart all My words which I will speak to you and listen closely. 11 "Go to the exiles, to the sons of your people, and speak to them and **tell them, whether they listen or not, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.'**"
8. The reality that Ezekiel faced, and the reality that every faithful pastor faces today proves that there is nothing new under the sun. Eccl 1:9
"That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun."
9. As Ezekiel began the second phase of his ministry God told him that he would:
 - a. Draw a crowd.
 - b. Be listened to but not responded to.
 - c. Be viewed as entertainment.
 - d. Be vindicated.

I. Ezekiel drew a crowd. 30

- A. He was well known and a topic of discussion in the streets and homes of the city.
- B. Those who went to hear him invited others to do the same, “Come now and hear what the message is which comes forth from the Lord.”
- C. The religious life of the Jewish people continued even though they were under God’s judgment.
- D. They loved religion even while rejecting the true worship of Jehovah.

NOTE: What was true then is true today, in that, many love the things related to what is viewed as worship in our culture while not actually loving and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God.

II. Ezekiel was listened to, but his message was not responded to. 31

- A. They gathered together and sat before Ezekiel as God’s people.
- B. They heard God’s message through His prophet.
- C. What they heard had no impact on how they lived.
- D. They were ruled by their lustful desires and sinful hearts.

III. Ezekiel and his message were nothing more than another form of entertainment. 32

- A. God did not want Ezekiel to misinterpret the large crowds and apparent interest he was seeing.
- B. He told Ezekiel, “Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument.”
- C. They liked Ezekiel’s delivery, they heard what he had to say, but they did not put into practice what they heard.

NOTE: Obedience to God will characterize the life of a true Christian. Matt 7:21-22

“ Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.”

- D. The problem was not with Ezekiel or his message; the problem was with the people he was trying to minister to.
- E. Paul made it clear that what was true in Ezekiel’s day would be true in the final days of the Church Age.

1. 2 Tim 3:1-7

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, **lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power;** Avoid such men as these. 6 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women **weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

NOTE: The phrase “led on by various impulses” is an apt description of many professing Christians today who are ruled by their feelings and selfish desires rather than the word of God.

**“Feelings come and feelings go and feelings are deceiving;
My anchor is the Word of God, naught else is worth believing.”**

2. 2 Tim 4:1-4

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure **sound doctrine**; but wanting to have their ears tickled, (**wanting to be entertained**) they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths (**unsound doctrine**).

NOTE: Much of what we call worship today is nothing more than religious entertainment that is carefully choreographed to appeal to our natural desires and preferences.

F. The reality is that the church is not having much of an impact of the culture, but the culture is having a significant impact on the church.

IV. Ezekiel and his message would one day be vindicated. 33

- A. The message God gave Ezekiel to preach would one day surely come to pass.
- B. Judgment and reality may be delayed, but no one can escape it.
- C. My goal is not to please or to entertain, but to reprove, rebuke and exhort with great patience and instruction.
- D. I understand that my message will not appeal to those who want to have their ears tickled.
- E. Every preacher's work will one day be evaluated by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- F. Many who are viewed as successes in the eyes of men will be shown to be failures before the throne of God, and others who are deemed to be failures in the eyes of men will be shown to have been faithful at the judgment seat of Christ.**

APPLICATION

- 1. Current studies reveal that many of those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ may not be true disciples.
- 2. This fact is true even when the message they are hearing is delivered by a preacher or teacher who is committed to faithfully preaching the word of God.
- 3. Several years ago a study by the Barna Group revealed that most pastors have an overly optimistic view of the spiritual commitment of their flock.
- 4. Their assessment is based on what they see and hear within a religious setting while the reality is being manifested in the culture.
- 5. May Pacolet Hills Baptist Church be a place where people gather together as God-seekers or as God's people, and then go out and actually put into practice, or live out, what they hear.