

“When Sermons Turn Into Songs” Ezekiel 33:30-33

Introduction: As we come to the book of Ezekiel we must remember that we are in the Babylonian captivity of the southern kingdom. There were two eyewitnesses of this era, Ezekiel and Daniel. Psalm 137 describes the beginning of this period, while Psalm 126 describes the end. God cures Israel from the sin of idolatry while in the city of idolatry. Ezekiel was deported to Babylon in 597 B.C. His wife died (Ezekiel 24:15-18) the day the siege began in 588 B.C. His ministry was twofold, to remind the exiles of their sins and to encourage them concerning God’s future blessings. Ezekiel may be compared with other Old Testament books as follows:

1. Isaiah Speaks of God’s Salvation
2. Jeremiah Speaks of God’s Judgment
3. Daniel Speaks of God’s Kingdom
4. Ezekiel Speaks of God’s Glory

Body: This chapter reaches back into some of Ezekiel’s previous messages (Chapters 3, 5, 6, 11, 18, 20, and 24) and brings together truths that were important to Israel’s understanding of God, their situation, and what God wanted them to do. It’s as though the Lord led His servant to combine these basic spiritual truths in one message so that nobody could say, “I didn’t hear what the Lord said to us!” Ezekiel turned the light of God’s Word on the nation as a whole (33:1-20), the people left in Judah and Jerusalem (33:23-29), and the exiles in Babylon (33:21-22, 30-33), and he revealed what was in their hearts and lives. However, there was only one problem, his sermons were turning into songs (Ezekiel 33:32).

- I. Notice the People’s Lips Ezekiel 33:30- *“Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD.”*
 - A. These spoke against the prophet: they could not say he was no prophet, he had his credentials and commission from the Lord; they could not speak against his doctrine, which was of God; nor against his lifestyle, which was agreeable to his character; but they said some things in a ludicrous manner, in a slighting and contemptuous way, as showed they had little reverence and respect for him.
 - B. Ezekiel knew that the people who came to his house to hear him speak didn’t appreciate his ministry or obey what they heard.
 - C. As the exiles met one another during the day, they would step out of the hot sunlight and discuss the prophet’s ministry. They even invited people to come with them to hear the preacher! But going to hear the Word of God wasn’t a serious thing to them. “Come on, let’s have some fun! Let’s go hear the prophet tell us what the Lord is saying”.
 - D. Luke 12:2-3- *“For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.”*

- II. Notice the People's Lifestyles Ezekiel 33:31- *"And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them..."*
- A. They were not concerned about God's truth or their personal responsibility; all they wanted to do was get up-to-date information so they could make money!
 - B. They listened to God's preacher but refused to obey what God told them to do.
 - C. They did not have a problem with listening. Ezekiel 14:1, 20:1
 - D. They had a problem with doing. Benjamin Franklin said, "Well done is better than well said."
 - E. Matthew 7:24-27
 1. From picturing two ways and two trees, our Lord closed His message by picturing two builders and their houses.
 2. The two ways illustrate the start of the life of faith; the two trees illustrate the growth and results of the life of faith here and now; and the two houses illustrate the end of this life of faith, when God shall call everything to judgment.
 3. Obedience to His will is the test of true faith in Christ.
 4. The two men in this story had much in common. Both had desires to build a house. Both built houses that looked good and sturdy. But when the judgment came (the storm), one of the houses collapsed. What was the difference? Not the mere external looks, to be sure. The difference was in the foundation.
 5. The test is not words, not saying "Lord, Lord," and not obeying His commands. How easy it is to learn a religious vocabulary, and even memorize Bible verses and religious songs, and yet not obey God's will.
 6. Words and works are no substitute for disobedience.
 - F. James 1:22-25
 1. Many people have the mistaken idea that hearing a good sermon or Bible study is what makes them grow and get God's blessing. It is not the hearing but the doing that brings the blessing.
 2. Too many Christians mark their Bibles, but their Bibles never mark them!
 3. This is the main purpose for owning a mirror: examination. Notice some people that examined themselves in light of God's Word:
 - a. Isaiah Isaiah 6:5- *"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips..."*
 - b. Peter Luke 5:8- *"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."*
 - c. Job Job 42:6- *"Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."*
 - d. Do you argue with your doctor's examination? Why the Lord's?
 - G. John 12:48- *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."*
- III. Notice the People's Love Ezekiel 33:31- *"...for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness."*
- A. Psalms 78:36-37
 - B. I John 3:18- *"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."*

C. Matthew 15:7-9

- IV. Notice the People's Listening Ezekiel 33:32- *"And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not."*
- A. Not the matter of the song, but the manner in which it is sung.
 - B. They were delighted with the harmony of his voice, the eloquence of his speech, the propriety of his expressions, the eloquence and aptness of his diction, and the cadency of his words, and not with the excellent doctrines he delivered.
 - C. They saw Ezekiel as an entertainer who sang love songs, not as an exhorter who sought to convey God's love to them.
- V. Notice the People's Loss Ezekiel 33:33- *"And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them."*
- A. This would mean personal privilege (hearing the Word), personal responsibility (obeying the Word), and personal accountability (being judged by the Word that they had heard).
 - B. Ezekiel 2:5

Conclusion: Believers today have the Word of God readily accessible not only in public meetings, but also in literature, on the Internet, over radio and television, as well as on video and audio tapes and CDs, and we will have much to answer for when we see the Lord. The important thing at the Judgment Seat of Christ won't be how much Bible we studied or learned, but how much we loved and obeyed.