

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious

Part IV: God's Prophecies Of Judgment By Signs, Ezekiel 4:1-5:17

B. God's Judgment Of Jerusalem's Siege Seen In The Signs Of Ezekiel's Reclining And Food (Ezekiel 4:4-17)

I. Introduction

- A. Ministering to a very spiritually hard, rebellious people is a humanly overwhelming task, but God at times actually directs some of His servants to function in such a ministry.
- B. However, God equips His servants to serve Him well in such callings, leading them powerfully to impact others, and one such event involved Ezekiel's exhibiting the signs of his reclining and food in Ezekiel 4:4-17.
- C. We view this passage for insight and application in ministering in our era (as follows):

II. God's Judgment Of Jerusalem's Siege Seen In The Signs Of Ezekiel's Reclining And Food, Ezek. 4:4-17.

- A. Ezekiel was to perform a reclining sign, typifying God's prolonged, confining judgment of the siege, Ez. 4:4-8:
 - 1. Having made a model of the city of Jerusalem and placed model siege works against it, Ezekiel was to lie on his left side, picturing his bearing the sin of the Northern Kingdom of Israel for 390 days, Ezekiel 4:1-3, 4. If he prostrated himself with his head toward Jerusalem like Daniel prayed in Daniel 6:10, Ezekiel faced north while lying on his left side to depict the Northern Kingdom of Israel and he faced south while lying on his right side to depict the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1235.
 - 2. Each day that Ezekiel lay on his left side represented a year that the people of God had sinned, inciting God's wrath and leading to His judgment of His people, Ezekiel 4:5.
 - 3. When he had completed the sign for the Northern Kingdom of Israel by lying 390 days on his left side, Ezekiel was to switch sides, lying on his right side for 40 days to signify the Southern Kingdom of Judah's 40 years of sin that led to the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, Ezekiel 4:6.
 - 4. These acts did not mean that Ezekiel was to remain in his lying position for 24 hours a day, for even the next sign in Ezekiel 4:9-17 included actions he was to take that required him to be up from a reclining position. (Ibid.) Nevertheless, for the hours each day he was scheduled to lie prostrate, Ezekiel was to lie on his side for the required number of days applicable for each nation.
 - 5. While lying on his side, setting his face toward the model of the siege of Jerusalem, Ezekiel was to prophesy against the city God's judgment, his arm bared to signify God's active involvement, Ezekiel 4:7.
 - 6. Then, to "symbolize the confinement of the siege, God had Ezekiel tied up with ropes" as he lay on his side, Ezekiel 4:8. Ezekiel was thus tied up during the time each day when he lay prostrate, Ibid.
- B. Ezekiel was to perform the sign of the food, typifying God's judgment of scarcity of the siege, Ezekiel 4:9-17:
 - 1. The livelihood scarcity of the prolonged siege of Jerusalem would be seen in the hardships the people faced in obtaining and eating food in Jerusalem, Ibid., p. 1236.
 - 2. To that end, Ezekiel was to symbolize this hardship by taking wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and spelt, common grains in Israel's diet (2 Samuel 17:27-29) and mix them together in a container and make them into bread for himself, Ez. 4:9. These foods were normally abundantly available in Judah, but in the siege, "supplies were so scarce that several foods had to be combined to provide enough for a meal," Ibid.
 - 3. Ezekiel had to eat this mixture of foods while lying on his side, rationing out eight ounces per day of the meal and drinking two-thirds of a quart of water, Ezekiel 4:10-11; Ibid. Such meager rations would signal to onlookers the "scarcity of food and water in Jerusalem during the siege (cf. Ezek. 4:16-17)," Ibid.
 - 4. Furthermore, signifying the hardships of the siege, God initially told Ezekiel to cook this bread using human excrement for his fuel, what would cause Ezekiel to become ceremonially unclean, Ezek. 4:12-13.
 - 5. Ezekiel was a priest (cf. Ezekiel 1:3), so ceremonially contaminating himself this way deeply bothered his conscience, so when he requested a different fuel, God let him use cow's dung instead, Ezekiel 4:14-15.
 - 6. Nevertheless, God signaled through this sign the hardships of a scarcity of food and water and emaciation and ceremonial uncleanness Jerusalem would face in its siege, Ezekiel 4:16-17; Ibid.

Lesson: *Because of the sins of Israel and of Judah, the siege they would face would involve the sufferings of long confinement amid the hardships of scarcity in food and water, ceremonial uncleanness and physical leanness.*

Application: *If we experience prolonged confinement amid hardships of scarcity of livelihood provisions, physical leanness and/or repulsive but forced activity for survival, may we examine our lives and repent of sin if needed.*