



January 20, 2008

A Prophet In Captivity

There are some who propose that the Old Testament was written during the period of Babylonian captivity as a means of preserving largely verbal traditions that had all but faded in the years prior to the Chaldean invasions of Judah. If that was the case then we might expect the writings to be filled with words of encouragement, not continued warnings. The writing of the prophet Ezekiel extends God's judgment against his people who remained after the first series of Babylonian captives had been taken into exile. We find that the prophet lived in one of the areas of the Babylonian empire that had been colonized by the captive Jews (**Ezek 1.1**). God demonstrated his power through a series of visions beginning with the appearance of the Lord as a whirlwind that came from the North (**Ezek 1.4-28**). The appearance of God and his throne is similar to the visions that John the apostle had on the island of Patmos as recorded in the book of Revelation. Ezekiel was charged with writing to the "rebellious" nation of Israel to warn them of judgment against them. It was bad enough that the Babylonians had taken captives once, that the best of the nation had been removed and relocated in a foreign land, and now a prophet of the Lord was to continue the message, revealing further consequences for transgression against God (**Ezek 2.3**). Ezekiel also addressed others who were to warn the people as well and noted the consequences for failing to do this (**Ezek 3,18**). Throughout the book, God's judgments are intermingled with statements of preservation, restoration and the establishment of a new kingdom. From writings of other prophets we understand that there would be a remnant that would return, that God would care for his people in spite of their circumstances, and that God would accomplish his purpose in spite of the evil that his people had done against Him. Speaking of the lives of the prophets, we find that they spoke against great evil during times of lawlessness. They warned of even more destruction to come for the things that were being practiced, and neglected and they were called upon to do these things at times that created

a hazard for their own lives. The courage Ezekiel mustered to discharge these responsibilities had to be great. His message was unsettling to a people that had already suffered calamity and were to expect more of the same for the things they were doing. This is remarkable in that we would think that if this was simply the fabrication of a man, or group of men, they would think of something more "inspiring" and positive to say. This was not the case and what we find is that the power of God surpassed the boundaries of nations and was not turned back, nor did it depend on the popularity of the message delivered. Religious leaders and teachers today might do well to think on the life of Ezekiel. Trends in religion since the first century have been to appease the wants and desires of self indulgent false teachers and the masses that cried for lenience and tolerance in order to do what they found meaningful. Doctrines are manipulated to attract audiences and although many false teachers appear to be sincere they teach a message of death and destruction. The word of the Lord has never been popular with the general public in it's purest form and teachings have been revised to reflect the attitudes of a few and the social trends of the populace in order to make "religion" and the worship of God more palatable. Ezekiel, like other prophets who were faithful to God, did not shrink from his appointed duty but proclaimed the word of the Lord without regard for his personal safety or his human limitations. What the book, and the life of the prophet reveals is that the power lies in the word of God, not in the one teaching it. It shows that the reach of God extends beyond the barrier of time and miles. It's truthfulness can be seen in the fact that those things revealed came about as God directed and stated that they would. Some might try to change the doctrine, but they cannot change the mind of the Lord.

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