



Breakthrough in the Badlands

July 3, 2016

WONDERFUL MERCY CHURCH



Returning to Prayer

- “Perhaps God is calling us to a greater level of prayer because the times we are in require it, and because the role He is calling us to requires it.” [Cheryl Jensen email 6/24/16]

An abstract, colorful background featuring a red rectangular text box on the right side. The background is composed of various shades of blue, green, yellow, and orange, with some areas showing a grid-like pattern. The text box contains the title and the main text of the passage.

Ezekiel 3:1-3 NLT

On July 31 of my thirtieth year, while I was with the Judean exiles beside the Kebar River in Babylon, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. ² This happened during the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity. ³ (The LORD gave this message to Ezekiel son of Buzi, a priest, beside the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians, and he felt the hand of the LORD take hold of him.)



Ezekiel in the Badlands

- The Jews' capital city has been ransacked, their beloved Temple desecrated and pillaged, and their best and brightest enslaved
- **Psalm 137:1**
“By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion.” [HCSB]



Ezekiel in the Badlands

- His generational inheritance is that he is a son of rejection and contempt
- This is where the most powerful experience of God Ezekiel will ever have occurs: in the middle of the badlands with no relief in sight



Breakthrough in the Badlands

- Ezekiel, in the badlands of captivity and poverty and national depression, sees the heavens open and has visions of God
- Verse 3b “the hand of the LORD was upon him there” NKJV
 - “there” = lowest, worst place he’d ever been
 - “hand of the LORD” indicates that God gained complete mastery over Ezekiel, so that he could be described as a man seized by God



Breakthrough in the Badlands

- The badlands are his training ground for being a son of the Father
- John Calvin: “*The hand of God, then, was a proof of new favor.*” No one gets favor like a son or a daughter!



Breakthrough in the Badlands

- Your badlands? God will use them to master you with his love and affirm your true identity as a son, as a daughter, and to bring you into new favor
- Your badlands? If you're willing, in that desolate place God may give you the most powerful spiritual experience of your life—these undesired badlands may be God's choicest place for revelation!

An abstract painting on the left side of the slide, featuring a mix of vibrant colors like blue, green, yellow, and red, with visible brushstrokes and textures that suggest a landscape or a complex, layered structure.

Breakthrough in the Badlands

- Ezekiel's breakthrough happens at the badlands' riverbanks, in community
- Maybe that's why God is calling us back to prayer, because he's making us into sons and daughters who stand with each other and believe, even in the badlands
- When things are hard and hope is elusive, that's when sons and daughters forge a trail blazed on a sure confidence in Father's love



An Invitation from God

- **Matthew 11:28-30**

Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” NLT



An Invitation from God

- **Matthew 7:7-8**

“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.” NLT



N.T. Wright

“When I read a passage like this I find it very hard to believe, and I have to remind myself of what it’s based on. Does Jesus really mean that God is ... like a father longing to give his children what they want and need? Can we truly take him up on such remarkably open-ended promises? It would be a shame to tone down one of the most sparkling and generous sets of promises anywhere in the Bible. ”

[N.T. Wright, *The New Testament for Everyone*]



The Kind of God We Have

- Jesus points us not to the kind of praying we do but to the kind of God we have
- **Matthew 7:11**
“So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.” NLT
- So: keep on asking, seeking, knocking, but not as an obligation or a burden. Rather, as an invitation to a truer, more authentic life with your Father



Breakthrough in the Badlands

- “We have been positioned much better with our giving in the past few weeks. We’ve had several large donations in June which have brought us up to budget and our projected income.” [L. Greenwood email 6/29/16]
- “I don’t know how, but I do know that prayer DOES make a difference.” [Daniel Psaute email 6/29/16]
- “Perhaps God is calling us to a greater level of prayer because the times we are in require it, and because the role He is calling us to requires it.” [Cheryl Jensen email 6/24/16]



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