



Called to Speak for God in Confusing and Trying Times

Ezekiel 1:1-3 *In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. On the fifth of the month—it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin—the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, by the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians. There the hand of the LORD was upon him.*

Have you ever have had to pack up everything you own and move across country? Even under ideal conditions relocating is an unsettling experience largely because everything is new: the people, the places, the food, the culture, and sometimes even the language. Ezekiel the priest and his fellow-Israelites had been relocated under less-than-optimal circumstances. They were Judean captives who had been deported from their homeland to Babylonia by King Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC. Their new home was a settlement on the Kebar River, a tributary of the Euphrates, in moder-day central Iraq, about 700 miles straight east of Jerusalem. To put it mildly Ezekiel and his countrymen had lots of adjusting to do in this foreign land: they had to make sense of the trauma they had recently experienced, learn a new dialect (the Aramaic spoken by the Babylonians was a linguistic “cousin” of Hebrew), adapt to an unfamiliar pagan culture, and make a living for themselves and their families among a people who regarded them with disdain. They felt forgotten. They wondered why God had allowed this to happen. They were frustrated with the direction their lives had taken and just wanted things to go back to the way they had been before. In the midst of such social and spiritual disorientation, God called Ezekiel to minister to his people.

We too are living in strange and unsettling circumstances. The world that surrounds us seems increasingly unfamiliar and hostile when compared to what it was only a few years ago. People’s priorities are shifting. Our culture is fragmenting. Wars are raging and tensions are rising. And into that volatility the glorious God of grace breaks in with his powerful word of truth, and he gives it to... the likes of Ezekiel and us. Ordinary though we are, we too like Ezekiel have been called to serve and speak for God in confusing and trying times, of which we’ve been amply forewarned by Jesus to expect as the Last Day draws near (cf. Matt. 24). Through the gift of faith in Christ God has saved us from this generation and made us aliens and strangers in this world (1 Peter 2:11), who live in the world but are not to be of the world.

Now were it up to us to stand firm and speak with clarity and resolve of our own might and making, we would certainly falter and fail, but as we shall see in the coming devotions, we serve the glorious God, who gives us his very words to speak and the responsibility to speak up for the salvation of souls. Join me this summer as we consider the Prophet Ezekiel’s counter-cultural message, wherein God gives us the content and the courage to speak in his name.

Prayer: Lord God, forgive us for putting our trust, hope, and security in the people, things, and institutions of this world. They are so much shifting sand. Instead ground our identity and our purpose in yourself and your saving word. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.