

INTRODUCTION

1. Ch. 33 marks a major turning point in Eze's career as a prophet.
2. To see that, we need to do a little review to set the scene.
3. For 8 yrs, Eze faithfully spoke God's message to the Jewish exiles in Babylon.
 - a. The Babs have conquered the Kingdom of Judah & made it a vassal.
 - b. To make sure Jeruz sent their annual tribute payment, the Babs took thousands of hostages from the wealthiest & most influential families back w/them, including the Jewish king.
 - c. These xiles were settled in a colony not far from the city of Babylon.
 - d. They hoped that somehow the Babs would fall and they'd be freed to return home.
 - e. Messengers from Jeruz fueled this hope w/regular reports something was cooking;
 - f. Plans were afoot to rebel against Babylon.
4. But the prophet Jer back in Jeruz, along w/Eze in Bab told the Jews NOT to rebel!
 - a. They announced that the Babs were the agents of God's judgment,
 - b. There to discipline them for worshipping idols.
 - c. If they rebelled, they'd really be rebelling against God and would be wiped out.
 - d. But the leaders in Jeruz ignored them, so Jer & Eze announced Jeruz's utter destruction was coming.
5. Eze did so for 8 yrs!
 - a. And as the exiles listened to him, they found his many acted sermons & object lessons **interesting**
 - b. But they didn't really buy his prophecies of Jeruz's doom.
 - c. In their minds, the City couldn't fall.
 - 1) It's where the glorious temple of Solomon was.
 - 2) They assumed that was a guarantee the City would somehow miraculously escape.
 - 3) After all, it had before when the Assyrians besieged it.
 - 4) The Babs had already left it alone the last time they were there. Surely they would do so again.
6. Eze seemed an interesting guy & harmless enough, so they left him alone to ramble on about Jeruz's destruction & their long exile in Bab.
7. Then in ch. 24, God told Eze the final siege of Jeruz had just been laid in.
8. Eze told the exiles there'd be no more reports from Jeruz until someone who escaped from the sack of the City arrived to tell them of its fall.
 - a. And indeed, no news came for almost 3 yrs!.
 - b. The siege of Jeruz lasted for 2½ yrs, then finally, about 5 mns after the City fell, a lone survivor evaded the Bab troops and carried the news to the exiles.

V. 21

And it came to pass in the 12th year of our captivity, in the 10th month, on the 5th day of the month, *that* one who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, "The city has been captured!"

1. On Jan 9, 585 BC, after 5 mns of carefully avoiding the Babylonian patrols, this guy finally made it to the exiles in Bab to tell them of Jerusalem's demise.
2. Imagine what a blow this was to the exiles. Especially when the scope of the destruction became clear.
 - a. Jeruz was reduced to a pile of smoking rubble.
 - b. The temple was gone. The Royal palace was obliterated. The city walls were gone.
 - c. And nearly everyone was dead.
 - 1) The long siege and seen starvation kill thousands.
 - 2) Then in the final battle, most of those left were put to the sword.
 - 3) The few thousand who survived the holocaust were tied up & hauled off to the slave-market.
 - 4) Only a tiny # would be added to their ranks as exiles.
3. So they; those exiles in Babylon were all that was left of what's called Israel!
4. This did more **rock** them on the heels; it **knocked** them onto their rears in shocked disbelief.
5. Their entire future was now a huge QUESTION MARK.
6. And that's why this marks the turning point in Eze's work as a prophet.
 - a. Now he moves from announcing Jeruz's doom to the glorious promise of Israel's future restoration.
 - b. The next chs of Eze are some of the most exciting in the Bible because they speak of things **happening in our lifetime** & culminate in the Last Days.

7. But in our psg today, God **warns** Eze abt HOW the people have responded to him.
 - a. He was to share this w/them as a **warning & challenge**.
 - b. And since we're abt to embark on a study of some amazing prophecies over the next couple weeks,
 - c. It's crucial we listen to these words **ourselves** to make sure we're NOT doing what Eze's original audience did.

V. 30

³⁰ "As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, 'Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.'

1. Because everything Eze had prophesied for the last 8 yrs came to pass, everyone's talking abt him.
 - a. He hadn't just said Jeruz would fall; he gave **details** abt the siege & the City's final ruin.
 - b. When reports finally arrived confirming the accuracy of his predictions, the exiles were abuzz.
 - c. His rep as a prophet, a msngr for God, grew.
2. Soon, everyone looked to him as the mouthpiece of God.
3. In today's terms we'd say that . . .
 - a. Everyone followed him on Twitter.
 - b. They visited his website & checked his blog daily.
 - c. They subscribed to his podcast & listened to his radio program.
 - d. They read his column in the paper. They attended his church.
4. He was popular! His name was on all lips.

Vs. 31-32

³¹ So they come to you as people do,

1. The people of Eze's time were as prone to fads & fashions as we are today.
2. It's **always** been the case that people get excited abt some new thing & pay a lot of attention to it for a season, then they move on to something else.
3. There was probably a "What's Hot & What's Not" section of the Babylonians Times.
 - a. And right then, Ezekiel was trending up – Way up!
 - b. Last week he was only in 53rd, but this week he's #3 & next week for sure he'll be #1.

³¹ So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people,

4. They come to Eze, appearing to be there for the right reason To hear the Word of God . . .

and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, *but* their hearts pursue their *own* gain.

5. They **heard**, but they didn't **do** anything with it.
 - a. All they DO, is hear.
 - b. Because when they come & take their seat, **that's all they intend to do** Hear!
6. The **claim** that they love God. But their hearts are set on themselves rather than His glory.
 - a. They say, "I want to hear what God says."
 - b. But the emphasis is on the "I want" rather than "What God says."
 - c. It's all abt **ME**; my glory – what **I** want.
 - d. I want to hear God's Word because it's amazing; I'm amazed and I like being amazed.
 - e. So amaze me Ezekiel. Bring it baby. Tell us some more fantastic stuff abt the future.
 - f. I'm not going to **DO** anything abt it. If I hear something that's convicting, I'll just shrug it off & chalk it up to you getting all preachy.
 - g. But come on **Easy-E**: Hit me w/some more of that "Thus sayeth the Lord rap."
7. That serious is what they thought. Look . . .

³² Indeed you *are* to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them.

8. Eze was little more than an **entertainer** to them, not a prophet.
9. It was all abt their **expectations** when they went to hear him.

- a. They came to be religiously entertained
 - b. And really, only because it was the current fad to do so.
 - c. Their expectation was: “It’ll be entertaining.”
 - d. Ezekiel often acted out his message & used elaborate object lessons that were fun to watch.
10. And when they left, their only question was, “How was Eze today? Was he ON or OFF?”
- a. Did he hit a home run w/that message, or was that not one of his better presentations?”
 - b. They evaluated Eze’s msg, not by its faithfulness to God’s Word but by how much they liked it.
11. But Eze didn’t sit down & figure out what to say w/the goal of hitting a home run or wowing the crowd.
- a. He wasn’t concerned abt CD sales, how many downloads there’d be or likes on FB.
 - b. What came forth from his lips was The Word of God; the Lord’s msg to His people—abt what they were to believe and DO!
12. Is what we do here on Sundays any different as we study God’s Word?
- a. Is this my word or God’s?
 - b. It’s my voice – but His Word.
13. What’s YOUR expectations when you come here?
- a. That’ you’ll be entertained—or that you’ll encounter some truth that will call for a response on your part?
14. Let’s shift this room 90° so that you’re all standing on Eastman.
- a. The road’s blocked on both ends & I’m here speaking to ya’ll.
 - b. I look up and see a massive 18-sheeler plow thru the barricade and start down the street, but from where you are, you can’t see it.
 - c. So I say in a monotone, “A behemoth of transport doth approach. Remove thyselfes posthaste.”
 - d. I could tell a story abt someone who got hit by a Mac truck, then say, “If you don’t want to be like that poor soul – get out of the street.”
 - e. I could tell a couple jokes abt truck drivers.
 - f. Or use elaborate gestures & vocal techniques to make the msg more entertaining.
15. Whatever the mode of delivery, the point is—the truth of the manner is ? A truck’s coming and you need to get out of the way!
- a. Don’t stand there applauding, ‘Lance really hit a home run today.’”
 - b. Or saying, “I don’t know; he seemed a little off.”
16. **GET OUT OF THE STREET!**
17. My goal isn’t to entertain; It’s to equip & motivate you to change.
- a. If you’re distressed > I aim to comfort.
 - b. If you’re comfortable > I aim to distress.
 - c. But with God’s Wisdom & Word, not my own.
18. My delivery, as rough & amateurish as it is, is but a servant of the msg God intends to MOVE us from where we are—**closer to Him**.
19. So—I need to ask you; to challenge you What do you expect when you come on Sundays?
- a. Is worship abt you or God?
 - b. Is attending to the preaching & teaching of the Word for your glory or God’s?
 - c. Do you come to see God move to you or you to Him?
20. Last March when we were in James 1 I shared a message titled **Hear/Do** on v. 22. James wrote . . . Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
- a. Today we reprise the same simple question & challenge as 5 mns ago.
 - b. Are we following thru on what we hear?
 - c. James certain had these vs in Eze 33 in view as he penned his challenge.
21. It’s one we’d do well to remember.

V. 33

³³ And when this comes to pass—surely it will come—then they will know that a prophet has been among them.”

1. The day would soon come when the people would realize Eze was a PROPHET, not an entertainer.
2. They would realize he said things they **ought** to have **acted on**, instead of merely being religiously entertained by.

3. Instead of evaluating Eze's performance, they ought to have *let his msg* evaluate them, then applied what that analysis revealed.
4. Have you ever thought how cool it would be if you could go back in time with the knowledge you have now?
 - a. Imagine you could pop back 30 years & buy up all the internet domain names of major cons for \$15 per domain.
Ford.com / GM / Nike / Coca-Cola / Pepsi > [Explain]
 - b. Go back and buy 10,000 shares of Google or Apple.
 - c. We could play that game endlessly.
 - d. The point is, because you'd know the future, you could position yourself to take advantage of what's coming.
5. We DO know the future! It's right here. Your future is spelled out right here.
6. You are going to stand before God & give account for how you've lived.
 - a. Even Christians will give account—not for sin; Jesus already took care of that.
 - b. We'll stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give account for how we've lived IN Christ.
 - c. It's not a judgment that ends in punishment but rather rewards for faithfulness.
7. I want you to nail it when you stand there.

To look into Jesus' smiling eyes as you hear Him say, "Well done."