

## ***A Living Illustration***

The Practicalities and Problems of Partnering with God

### ***Impossible Hope Series – Part 3***

Ezekiel 3:24-27; 4:1-3; 24:15-27

January 27-28, 2024

#### **Introduction**

- **The concept of the Incarnation<sup>1</sup>** – God becoming flesh. In **Philippians**, chapter **2**, Paul tries to explain what happened when the Son of God was born on earth. In essence he was explaining that **God came into the world and added humanity to His nature**. In other words, **the infinite God entered into our reality to be a part of it and to draw close to us** in order that He might save us and connect with us in a new way. **This whole concept** of God entering into our world and doing stuff here is called **Incarnation**.
  - Php 2:5–8 – “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”
- **What Jesus was truly telling his people & Paul explained – Body of Christ<sup>2</sup>** - In **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthian 10, 11 & 12**, Paul explains a concept that many of us take for granted: that all Christians together make up the Body of Christ. We like to think of it as Paul’s way of telling us that we are a family. But actually **the primary intent of the metaphor isn’t really about our connection** (that’s the key secondary purpose) **but our purpose**. A BODY carries out the intentions and plans of the HEAD. I don’t need to go through the science of it because all of us know what he meant. **What Jesus wants to do from heaven, we are the ones that carry it out on earth**.

#### **The INCARNATION didn’t Stop with Jesus’ Earthly Ministry**

- **Jesus isn’t done - We, children of God, are Jesus’ primary vehicle of getting stuff done on earth**. It’s tempting to think that what Jesus did by coming to earth and His earthly ministry was all of it and we are simply doing the details mopping up the mess, but that is not true. **What He did was START something that we CONTINUE**. We are called the Body of Christ not

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<sup>1</sup> “The English word ‘incarnate’ can function either as an adjective or as a verb. Verbally, it literally means to ‘render incarnate’ or to ‘embody in flesh’. Söderblom defines it as follows: ‘The term incarnation is applied to the act of a divine or supernatural being in assuming the form of a man or animal and continuing to live in that form upon earth’. However, both this definition and the verb ‘incarnation’ (Latin *incarnatio*) can be misleading, for they almost imply an entering into a man (incarnation—Greek *ensarkosis*), thus amounting to little more than a form of divine possession. Surely Professor Moule is right when he suggests, somewhat guardedly, that it would be more in line with the traditional understanding of the incarnation to speak of ‘carnation’ or *sarkosis*—God becoming man while not ceasing to be divine. However, in Christian circles the term ‘incarnate’ is rarely used as a verb. Instead it is the adjectival form which is predominant, acting as a sort of ‘title’—‘Jesus—God incarnate’. Even so, the verbal idea is the one which underlies this usage and is the most pertinent to our discussion.” Themelios Journal, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1988

“Incarnation. The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation affirms that the eternal Son of God took flesh from His human mother and that the historical Christ is at once both fully God and fully man. It is opposed to all theories of a mere theophany or transitory appearance of God in human form, frequently met with in other religions. By contrast, it asserts an abiding union in the Person of Christ of Godhead and manhood without the integrity or permanence of either being impaired. It also assigns the beginnings of this union to a definite and known date in human history. The doctrine, which took classical shape under the influence of the controversies of the 4th-5th cents. (for history, see *CHRISTOLOGY*), was formally defined at the Council of \*Chalcedon of 451 (q.v.).” Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor 12:27 – “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

just in a metaphorical, proverbial way, but in a practical way. **Jesus has MORE TO DO**. He wants to do it through us. There is more revelation (teaching), there is more healing (miraculous), there is more freedom (deliverance) to be done. **This time it's going to come through our hearts, our words, and our hands.** It wasn't easy for Jesus and He wasn't received well. Who's to say that we will have a different experience? We won't (John 13:15-16; 15:20). But important things are difficult sometimes.

- **No one knew this better than Ezekiel...**
- **Recap**
  - **Week 1** – God **takes a seemingly random Jewish prophetic priest up to a heavenly reality** where he sees God and heavenly creatures. It's a multisensory overload and leaves him angry and overwhelmed for a week afterward. We find out that was necessary because of the incredibly difficult assignment God was calling Ezekiel to.
  - **Week 2** – God tells Ezekiel **what his assignment is** and it's to be a prophet to the nation of Israel, specifically to the Jews around him who had been deported from their home nation to Babylon. The Jewish people had lost their land and their temple and were distraught. They believed that when they lost everything, they lost not just hope but the possibility of being restored. God wanted the Jewish people to understand what they were going through and tasked **Ezekiel with being His mouthpiece** to tell them. But God warned Ezekiel that it was going to be **a tough assignment**,...no one was going to truly listen to him. When they rejected God's leadership they rejected God's message too.
  - **This week we learn what specifically his assignment demanded of him, and it is truly extreme.**
    - **Warning Disclaimer** - **Ezekiel is one of the most extreme examples of a prophet partnering with God.** Just like God telling **Abraham** to sacrifice his son Isaac, or **Noah** to build a boat for a worldwide flood, this is not the norm. But **sometimes we need to see the extreme so that we can track on the normal**. Once we see the flashy we can learn to see the subdued. No one is expecting that someone here at Bridgeway would ever be called to the extremes that Ezekiel did, but we all assume that some version of God speaking to us and speaking through us, even in uncomfortable situation WILL occur.

### Lesson

- **A Strange, strange assignment<sup>3</sup>** – as I just mentioned, God asked Ezekiel to do some extremely strange things. **The point was to be a living example of a spiritual lesson.**<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel was supposed to **enact drama skits while explaining God's message** (prophetic playacting). The problem was how strange God was wanting to do and the extreme lengths that He would push Ezekiel.

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<sup>3</sup> "By means of a series of disturbing but rhetorically powerful sign-acts he is to address head-on the inevitable fate of Jerusalem...Sign-acts are best interpreted as dramatic performances designed to visualize a message and in the process to enhance its persuasive force so that the observers' perceptions of a given situation might be changed and their beliefs and behavior modified."<sup>3a</sup> NICOT, Daniel Block

<sup>4</sup> All of Ezekiel's life was an illustration from his body to his words, to his family, to his emotions, to his nation. Although our calling is not usually so severe, we are called to be the incarnation of Christ in everything we do. We are the Body, and He is the head. We carry out what His desire is.

- **Eating a scroll<sup>5</sup> – last week** we got our first taste (pun intended) of the oddity that Ezekiel was about to live out. God gave him a large papyrus scroll and told him to eat it all and fill his belly with it.<sup>6</sup> Although we all collectively gasped at the power of the meaning: that we must let the Word of God do a deep work inside us before we start sharing it with others, eating a scroll is WEIRD.
  - Eze 2:8–3:3 - “But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.”<sup>9</sup> And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it.<sup>10</sup> And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning [moaning] and woe. **3** And he said to me, “Son of man, eat whatever you find [see] here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.”<sup>2</sup> So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. **3** And he said to me, “Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.” Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.”
- **The list of 6 tame but uncomfortable assignments<sup>7</sup>** – Eating the scroll was simply one of the weird, but rather tame illustrations that God would have Ezekiel live out. Here’s a simple list<sup>8</sup> of more odd but relatively tame things he had him do during his lifetime:
  - 1. Weep & Wait in public** – God told Ezekiel to go out into the **public square and weep, cry, and wail at the top of his voice like he is mourning.**
    - **The Point** – everyone will ask you why you are doing this, and you will say, ‘that’s how you will all act when God starts bringing more judgment down on you,’ and that’s how I feel about everything that’s going to happen.
      - Eze 21:6–7 - “As for you, son of man, groan; with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan before their eyes. <sup>7</sup> And when they say to you, ‘Why do you groan?’ you shall say, ‘Because of the news that it is coming. Every heart will melt, and all hands will be feeble; every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it is coming, and it will be fulfilled,’” declares the Lord God.”
  - 2. Preaching to the Mountains<sup>9</sup>** – 2 separate times God told Ezekiel to prophecy to nature, out loud, where everyone could see and hear him. First it was to the mountains and then it was to the **birds and animals** of the mountains.
    - **The Point** – the location all over Israel would be filled with calamity. The land would have to witness God’s judgment on His people, and they would bear the brunt of collateral damage because of the sins of the Jewish people.
      - Eze 6:1–3 – “The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup> “Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, <sup>3</sup> and say, You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys: Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places.”
  - 3. Odd physical signs** – over and over God tells Ezekiel to do strange acting out motions to go along with his prophecy. One time it was **striking his thigh<sup>10</sup> and clapping his hands,<sup>11</sup>** then another time he was supposed to **swing a sword around,<sup>12</sup>**

<sup>5</sup> Eze 2:8–3:3

<sup>6</sup> “The narrative residue consists of a straightforward, objective chronicle of Ezekiel’s experience. The facts are recounted with great economy of words; there is no flowery language, no elevated diction. Apart from its autobiographical form, and the surprise implicit in the word *hinnēh*, the text provides few clues about the author’s response to the event. It is not that occasions for response are lacking. Horror might have been expressed at the laments, moaning, and wailing written on the scroll, or disgust at being commanded to eat it, or surprise as well as pleasure when the ingested scroll turned sweet as honey in the prophet’s mouth. But what emerges is the picture of a passive prophet. In the inaugural vision he had been a spectator; here he is a sponge.” NICOT, Daniel Block

<sup>7</sup> “Prophets functioned primarily as messengers of God, and the critical issue in the conflict between true and false prophets was which persons had actually been commissioned (*šālah*) by Yahweh. Accordingly, the most serious charge that could be leveled against a true prophet was “Yahweh has not sent you” (cf. Jer. 43:2).” NICOT Daniel Block

<sup>8</sup> Although I wrote down all the illustrations that I found, I could have missed one or two smaller ones. Let’s consider this a sample list rather than exhaustive.

<sup>9</sup> Eze 6:1–3; 36; 39:17ff.

<sup>10</sup> Eze 21:12

<sup>11</sup> Eze 21:14

<sup>12</sup> Eze 21:14

then it was to **make a literal road sign**<sup>13</sup> that had two directions on it for the invading king to see. Another time God had him **make two sticks and combine them**<sup>14</sup> to show the unifying of the North and South of Israel.

- **The Point** – All of these motions had meaning. Sometimes it was that they would be attacked with a sword, sometimes it was about making decisions or as a demonstration for how God felt about something.

4. **Saying weird explicit things**<sup>15</sup> - It one thing to prophesy about weird things, it's another to have to say **really explicit or dark things to mixed crowds. He's preaching in public so who knows who's listening or if kids are around.** People would be angry at him for saying stuff like this in public and tell him he was a liar, a sinner, a pervert. God had him say things like telling a story about **two sisters who were prostitutes who were fondled, had many partners, were raped, they flaunted themselves nakedly so extremely they were like animals in heat.** This is **nothing compared to the violent language** that he had to share (**tearing off breasts, having ears & nose cut off, child sacrifice, etc.**). And that was all in only one message in chapter 23.

- **The Point** – Both the North and South of Israel had chased after other gods and demeaned themselves through them. Their unfaithfulness was like marital unfaithfulness and God was going to lay siege to Jerusalem and they would be torn to pieces.

5. **Bound and mute**<sup>16</sup> - Early on, in chapter 3, basically where we left off last week, God told Ezekiel to go into his house and **have someone tie him up** so he couldn't leave his house. **God would strike him with the inability to speak (muteness)** until it was time to share a verbal prophecy and then he could speak. It is not clear whether that silence lasted one day or for years.<sup>17</sup>

- **The Point** – God was going to be in full control about what Ezekiel does and doesn't do. He is in charge of what he does and doesn't say. His whole life is in the hands of God to live out exactly the illustration God is trying to convey.
  - Ez 3:24-27 – *“But the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and he spoke with me and said to me, ‘Go, shut yourself within your house. 25 And you, O son of man, behold, cords will be placed upon you, and you shall be bound with them, so that you cannot go out among the people. 26 And I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be mute and unable to reprove them, for they are a rebellious house. 27 But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’ He who will hear, let him hear; and he who will refuse to hear, let him refuse, for they are a rebellious house.”*

6. **Pretend you are going on a secret trip**<sup>18</sup> - In chapter 12 God tells Ezekiel to **get some baggage, pack his clothes in it like he's leaving home forever, literally dig through an outside wall of the city with his own hands, with his face masked, like he's sneaking out at night.** He was supposed to have people watch him do this and he's supposed to **pretend that he's terrified** during the whole time including while he's eating and drinking he's supposed to visibly tremble.

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<sup>13</sup> Ezek 21:19

<sup>14</sup> Ezek 37:15ff

<sup>15</sup> Ezek 23

<sup>16</sup> Ezekiel 3:22-27; Oddly it says in Ezek 33:22 that God finally lifted the muteness – there's no way that Ezekiel was mute all those years, right? He talks a lot in his book but God did say that he could only talk when God wanted to say something. Maybe so.

<sup>17</sup> I'd have to do more study to find out.

<sup>18</sup> Eze 12:1-9, 17-20

- **The Point** – the remaining Jews in Jerusalem will continue to be beat up and dominated and they will live in fear until everything finally comes crashing down around them and they will have to flee.
  - Eze 12:1–9, 17-20 – “The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup> “Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, but see not, who have ears to hear, but hear not, for they are a rebellious house. <sup>3</sup> As for you, son of man, prepare for yourself an exile’s baggage, and go into exile by day in their sight. You shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house. <sup>4</sup> You shall bring out your baggage by day in their sight, as baggage for exile, and you shall go out yourself at evening in their sight, as those do who must go into exile. <sup>5</sup> In their sight dig through the wall, and bring your baggage out through it. <sup>6</sup> In their sight you shall lift the baggage upon your shoulder and carry it out at dusk. You shall cover your face that you may not see the land, for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel.” <sup>7</sup> And I did as I was commanded. I brought out my baggage by day, as baggage for exile, and in the evening I dug through the wall with my own hands. I brought out my baggage at dusk, carrying it on my shoulder in their sight. <sup>8</sup> In the morning the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>9</sup> “Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, ‘What are you doing?’... <sup>17</sup> And the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>18</sup> “Son of man, eat your bread with quaking, and drink water with trembling and with anxiety. <sup>19</sup> And say to the people of the land, Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel: They shall eat their bread with anxiety, and drink water in dismay. In this way her land will be stripped of all it contains, on account of the violence of all those who dwell in it. <sup>20</sup> And the inhabited cities shall be laid waste, and the land shall become a desolation; and you shall know that I am the LORD.”
- **But Wait, there’s More** – If all those things sounded odd, uncomfortable, and made you pray that God never asked you to do anything like that in your life, **we are going to examine two of the most severe assignments** of Ezekiel’s ministry in detail. You ain’t seen nothing yet.
  - **Playacting the Siege of Jerusalem** – right after God tells Ezekiel to go home and be tied up and mute, He lays out a really extensive and complicated assignment for him. Let’s take a look. (for a simple solution to the perceived impossibility of these events in chronological order see footnote<sup>19</sup> – e.g. how can you do playacting when you are bound?)
  - **A Pretend City - Ezekiel 4:1-3** - “And you, son of man, take a brick and lay it before you, and engrave on it a city,<sup>20</sup> even Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> And put siegeworks against it, and build a siege wall<sup>21</sup> against it, and cast up a mound<sup>22</sup> [ramp]

<sup>19</sup> A more likely solution interprets the present text as a redactional conflation of a series of separate sign-activities that must have been conducted over an extended period of time. The possibility that these performances need not have occurred in the present order obviates the need to harmonize apparently irreconcilable actions.<sup>21</sup> Based on the internal data, I propose the following sequence of performances: 1. Sign-acts relating to the siege of Jerusalem. Ezekiel procures a brick, sketches on it the map of the city, and erects the griddle between it and himself (4:1–3). With his face toward the model (4:3), he lies down on his left side for 390 days. Meanwhile he bares his arm and prophesies against Jerusalem (4:7), perhaps with interpretive comments whose essence is captured in 5:5–9. During this protracted period of siege, his diet consists of the rations outlined in 4:8–11, and he explains his actions with comments like those preserved in 4:16–17 and 5:10a. 2. Sign-acts relating to the destruction of Jerusalem. Upon completion of the siege-related performances, Ezekiel shaves his head, divides the hair into three parts, which he burns, chops up, and scatters to the winds, respectively (5:1–2). The verbal interpretation of these actions is summarized in 5:12–17, 10b. 3. Sign-acts relating to the deportation of Jerusalem’s population. Prior to scattering the third part of his hair, Ezekiel picks out a few hairs and tucks them away in the hem of his garments (5:3–4). Meanwhile he turns over and lies on his right side for 40 days (4:6). During this period his diet consists of barley cakes prepared over fecal fuel, for which he offers an appropriate explanation (4:12–13).” NICOT

<sup>20</sup> “The word for tile or brick, *lëbênâ*, is related to Akk. *libittu*, “sun-dried brick, tile,” which in turn yields the denominative verb *labānu*, “to make bricks.” The command to incise a map on the brick probably assumes that the clay is still fresh and soft and that it would harden under the hot Babylonian sun. The practice of sketching a city plan on a clay brick is confirmed by several exemplars discovered by archeologists.” NICOT, Daniel Block

<sup>21</sup> “siege wall. In real life siege walls consisted either of a series of mounds or a continuous mound of rock or earth around the city from which the attacker could observe the movements of the defenders on and inside the walls. Ezekiel probably created his model walls by heaping up rows of sand or earth with his hands.” NICOT

<sup>22</sup> “Since fortresses were usually located strategically at the tops of hills, hence inaccessible to offensive machines of war, attacking armies constructed huge inclines so battering rams could be positioned near the walls. These inclines were made of vast amounts of earth, rocks, and debris, which were carried in baskets and literally “poured” out.” NICOT

against it. Set camps<sup>23</sup> also against it, and plant battering rams<sup>24</sup> against it all around. <sup>3</sup> And you, take an iron griddle,<sup>25</sup> and place it as an iron wall between you and the city; and set your face toward it, and let it be in a state of siege, and press the siege against it. This is a sign for the house of Israel.”

- **Public playacting** – Although this is going to go on in his home, the whole point of doing any of these things is a demonstration to Israel, so the actions need to be public. How he got everyone to his house and showed them what was going on isn't explained.
- **Playing with army men** – Ezekiel was supposed to grab a soft brick and inscribe on it the word Jerusalem and maybe draw a couple things on it so people know it's representing the holy capital city of Israel. Then he's supposed to bring in or scoop up dirt and make makeshift little army gear to attack it all around.
- **Why the griddle?** – the griddle is a metal pan that was used for baking flat breads over fire. It was a big one. The symbol was that there was an **immovable block between God** (who is bringing the attack through the Babylonians) and His people. It was too late to turn back now. Their rebellion led to this.
- **Does this have application for us?** – I see two obvious applications or lessons we can learn: **1.) our sinfulness and rebellion of God blocks us from His blessings.** We think that there are no ramifications due to grace, but there are. Even though this is under the Old Covenant and there was a different relationship between God and those chosen people, the principle is similar: rebellion changes things. **2.) God's orchestrating the humbling** – all this stuff is called out ahead of time. God not only knows it's going to happen, He is orchestrating it. It's intentional. This means that in our lives some things are set up by Him for specific purposes.
- **Tied-up, Side-Sleeper - Ezekiel 4:4-8** - *“Then lie on your left side [facing the brick], and place the punishment of the house of Israel<sup>26</sup> upon it. For the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their punishment. <sup>5</sup> For I assign to you a number of days, 390 days,<sup>27</sup> equal to the number of the years of their*

<sup>23</sup> “army camps. Ezekiel’s use of the plural *maḥānôt*, “camps,” suggests several separate army camps or military divisions strategically positioned outside the city walls.” NICOT

<sup>24</sup> “battering rams. Finally Ezekiel positions the battering rams. That these “siege engines” are first mentioned in the annals of Ashurbanipal suggests that the Assyrians may have invented them. Because of their weight and cumbersome design, battering rams were difficult to move over long distances. However, they were critical for conquering the walled cities of Palestine. The ram itself was rendered more effective for creating breaches in walls made of mud bricks by tipping it with metal.” NICOT

<sup>25</sup> “The griddle was a domestic utensil used to bake flat cakes over an open fire. Throughout Israel’s history the common folk used ceramic disks for griddles, while copper utensils were used by the rich, even in earlier times. By the 7th-6th century iron griddles would have been accessible to some in the middle classes.<sup>41</sup> Unlike Isa. 59:2, the griddle Ezekiel erects does not symbolize the sin that has come between Israel and their covenant God, but the wall that Yahweh himself, represented by Ezekiel, has placed between himself and Jerusalem. By specifying an *iron* instrument, he highlights the impenetrability of the barrier and the firmness of his rejection of his people. He will listen to their cries no longer (cf. Isa. 1:15; Lam. 3:8–9, 44; Job 30:20; 35:9–13). The covenant Lord whom they trusted for deliverance has turned his back on them, and his resolve will not weaken (cf. Ezek. 5:8, 12). His decision to bring Jerusalem to its knees was irrevocable.” NICOT

<sup>26</sup> “Since Ezekiel uses “Israel” and “Judah” interchangeably everywhere else, *bêt yisrā ’el* should be understood similarly here.” NICOT

<sup>27</sup> “...the 390-day period cannot signify the duration of the exile of the northern kingdom; it has to do with the nation of Israel as a whole.” NICOT

*punishment* [bad behavior triggering punishment].<sup>28</sup> *So long shall you bear the punishment* [difficulty] *of the house of Israel.* <sup>6</sup> *And when you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah. Forty days I assign you, a day for each year.*<sup>29</sup> <sup>7</sup> *And you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, with your arm bared, and you shall prophesy against the city.* <sup>8</sup> *And behold, I will place cords upon you, so that you cannot turn from one side to the other, till you have completed the days of your siege.”*

- **390 days forward or backward?** – to say that this whole story is filled with difficulty in the wording is an understatement. For thousands of years, scholars have flipped flopped on what they think it meant. **Are we supposed to see it as: 1) Israel blew it so they are going to be punished for future 390,** which, if we launch from the destruction of Jerusalem in 586BC, would lead to the future date **207BC?** Or, **2.) are we supposed to see it as, they had been acting rebellious for the last 390 years, which means they have been rebellious since 976BC which is roughly the time of the newly constructed Solomonic temple** (Holy Spirit moved from transient/mobile tabernacle to the more permanent temple location). The thinking is that it was Solomon (builder of the temple) that launched Israel’s slide toward apostasy (which is true). I favor the second view.
- **Was the 390 days continual and all-consuming?**<sup>30</sup> – How in the world did Ezekiel lay constantly for 390 days? What if he had to go to the bathroom? What about the effect on his body? How could he practically do that? It’s most likely that he did so for **key PORTIONS of 390 days** (most visible hours that people could see it).
- **Why 40 days on his right side?** – This seems to be a tie in to the wandering in the desert for 40 years in Israel’s history under Moses for disobedience. Each year was representing one day that the spies were in the land supposedly

<sup>28</sup> “Most scholars agree that Ezekiel’s 390 days represent 390 years of ‘*āwōn*, and that the computation of the period in view must begin with the fall of Jerusalem in 586. However, the foregoing calculations require two modifications: ‘*āwōn* should be interpreted as a designation for Israelite behavior, viz., “iniquity,” not as the punishment for that behavior, and the computation should be retrospective rather than forward looking. Calculating 390 years backward from 586 yields a starting point for the period of Israel’s iniquity of 976. This is remarkably close to the date on which the glory (*kābôd*) of Yahweh had moved from the tabernacle and entered the Holy of Holies of the newly constructed temple. According to the Hebrew historian, however, Solomon, the monarch who had provided Yahweh with his temple, was also responsible for beginning official court-sponsored apostasy.<sup>68</sup> For 390 years thereafter, Israel would provoke the wrath of Yahweh, her covenant Lord, with her simultaneous worship of other gods and other apostate behavior. This behavior Ezekiel characterizes as ‘*āwōn*, “iniquity.”” NICOT

<sup>29</sup> “One may assume that forty years serves as a round number for one generation, comparable to the forty years that the Israelites spent in the desert. In fact, this correlation offers the key to the interpretation of this action. According to Num. 14:33–35, with which this verse displays several stylistic links, the Israelites were sentenced to one year in the desert for every day the spies had spent exploring the land of Canaan, until the corpses of that entire generation lay in the desert. Here the phrase *nāsā’ ‘āwōn* evidently means “to bear punishment,” that is, to suffer the consequences of one’s iniquitous actions: judgment arising out of Yahweh’s hostile disposition. The echoes of the Numbers text in this passage suggest that one should interpret similarly Ezekiel’s sign-act of bearing the ‘*āwōn* of the house of Judah. The forty years represent forty years of punishment for the iniquities reflected in vv. 4–5, an apparent reference to the people’s experience of exile. Like the original forty-year period in the wilderness, the purpose of the exile is to eliminate a generation of Israelites that has provoked his wrath and to set the stage for a new beginning.” NICOT

<sup>30</sup> “It is unlikely that Ezekiel lay on his side continuously for 390 days. He probably adopted this posture for several hours each day, timing his lying down to achieve maximum rhetorical effect, that is, at the busiest part of the day. During the rest of the day, especially in the evenings, he probably carried on with his normal activities in the privacy of his home or prepared for the performances of the next day.” NICOT

getting info that God showed them. This 40 days is less about a duration (40 more days tacked on), than a meaning (rebelliousness).

- **Why is his 'arm bared'**<sup>31</sup> – usually baring your arm is the military sign to launch into battle. It would seem that people watching would assume that he was triggering a moment that God was going to come in and rescue, but that was absolutely NOT what it was saying. It was saying that God was the one coming at them and he was triggered to do His judgment.
- **Does this have application for us?** – I see one obvious lesson to learn: 1.) **God's patience** – this destruction is coming at the end of hundreds of years of trying to get them to turn around. God is so patient with His creation. Yes, there will come a time when He needs to cut off the allowance and do something severe, but He does everything gently first to get our attention.
- **Yucky Food and Poop - Ezekiel 4:9-17** - *“And you, take wheat and barley, beans<sup>32</sup> and lentils,<sup>33</sup> millet<sup>34</sup> and emmer,<sup>35</sup> and put them into a single vessel and make your [desperately poor scraped together] bread from them.<sup>36</sup> During the number of days that you lie on your side, 390 days, you shall eat it.<sup>37</sup> <sup>10</sup> And your food that you eat shall be by weight, ~~twenty~~ **shekels** [8 oz] a day; from day to day you shall eat it. <sup>11</sup> And water you shall drink by measure, the sixth part of a ~~hin~~ [2/3 quart]; from day to day you shall drink. <sup>12</sup> And you shall eat it as a barley cake, baking<sup>38</sup> it in their sight on human dung.”<sup>39</sup> <sup>13</sup> And the LORD said, “Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread unclean, among the nations where I will drive them.”<sup>14</sup> Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I have never defiled myself. From my youth up till now I have never eaten what died of itself [random carcass] or was torn by beasts [roadkill], nor has tainted [decomposed] meat come into my mouth.”<sup>40</sup>*

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<sup>31</sup> “Ezekiel is to bare his arm, a military gesture of a warrior preparing for battle. Given the prevailing theological sentiments, Ezekiel’s audience may well have interpreted the action positively, especially since the idiom *hāšap zērōa*, “to bare the arm,” was used to describe Yahweh’s action of reaching out and delivering his people (Isa. 52:10). They probably expect that Yahweh will step in at the last minute and rescue the city from the enemy. However, the conjunction of the gesture with the physical disposition of Ezekiel’s face, and the command to prophesy against Jerusalem (*nibbā’ āleyhā*), depict Yahweh’s hostile intent against the city. The enemy with whom the inhabitants will have to contend is their own covenant Lord.” NICOT

<sup>32</sup> “a leguminous broad bean widely cultivated in the ancient world. The vegetable was cooked and eaten whole or pounded in mortars and mixed with millet to make porridge or coarse bread.” NICOT

<sup>33</sup> “The vegetable, which seems to have been one of the first domesticated in the Near East, was used in soups and purées, and occasionally ground into flour and mixed with grains to make bread.” NICOT

<sup>34</sup> “This is a summer crop requiring irrigation in Israel.” NICOT

<sup>35</sup> “Emmer was inferior in quality to both wheat and barley, but provided the people of the ancient Near East with a fall-sown wheat.” NICOT

<sup>36</sup> “this dough is unusual in that it includes ground bean and lentil meal along with cereal flour. This is apparently intended not as some exotic Babylonian recipe but as a siege diet. Food will be so scarce that it will be impossible to get enough flour and vegetable meal together of any one kind to make even one loaf of bread except by “scraping the bottom of each of the storage barrels.” NICOT

<sup>37</sup> “According to v. 9b, this loaf was to provide food for Ezekiel for the entire 390-day period he would spend lying on his left side. The logistical problems this command creates are obvious. First, no one could survive that long on one loaf of bread made from what little could be salvaged from storage containers. We should probably envision him adopting his prone position for several hours each day, and then, while the audience watched, eat one small bite of the loaf.” NICOT

<sup>38</sup> “*ugā* denotes a flat cake or disk of bread baked in a pan over hot stones.” NICOT

<sup>39</sup> The use of dung for fuel in itself was not uncommon, especially where other forms of fuel were scarce (as in Mesopotamia). However, aware of the Mosaic prescriptions for disposing of human waste in the interests of keeping the Israelite camp holy (Deut. 23:12–14 [Eng. 11–13]), the priestly prophet reacts to Yahweh’s command with disgust and shock.” NICOT

<sup>40</sup> “The prophet cites three categories of dietary taboos that he has not violated from his youth: the ban on flesh from animals that have died natural deaths, from either disease or exhaustion; flesh of animals that have been killed or mutilated by a beast of prey; and *contaminated meat*. This last expression, *bēšar piggūl*, is rare, but the sense is suggested by Lev. 7:18 and 19:7, where *piggūl* refers to sacrificial meat that has not been eaten by the third day. In the absence of refrigeration such meat would obviously have begun to decompose. In Isa. 65:4, the only other

<sup>15</sup> Then he said to me, “See, I assign to you cow’s dung instead of human dung, on which you may prepare your bread.” <sup>16</sup> Moreover, he said to me, “Son of man, behold, I will break the supply of bread in Jerusalem. [they will get starved out] They shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and they shall drink water by measure and in dismay. <sup>17</sup> I will do this that they may lack bread and water, and look at one another in dismay, and rot away because of their punishment.”

- **6 Grain Bread**<sup>41</sup> - it’s a hodgepodge of grains and vegetables. The point seems to be that it’s the bottom of the barrel of your remaining supplies and you don’t have enough of any one thing, so you mush them all together to make *something*.
- **Very little water** – This would be citywide water rationing during a siege to make it last. The whole point is that these are portions that are leading up to starvation.
- **Cooked over human excrement or cow dung?** – any excrement is a burning fuel, especially if you are absolutely desperate and don’t have any wood or good burnable materials, but in Israel human waste was kept out of the camp according to Mosaic regulations. In other words, human waste works, but it was considered ‘unclean’ ritually. Ezekiel freaks out and says, ‘even I have standards!’ Odd push back, but perhaps he was like Peter who had the vision to eat unclean animals and tried to push back thinking maybe it was a test. Or perhaps he was so steeped in holy requirements as a priest, that he simply couldn’t stomach it. Regardless, he pushed back and God caved to him and allowed him to use cow patties.
- **Does this have application for us?** – I see one: 1.) **We tend to sanitize God and shouldn’t.** Too often we have allowed the sweet and clean New Testament Jesus version we learned in Sunday school carry into our adult lives and think that everything that God does is clean, sanitized, nice, orderly, and appropriate. It’s not. God is God. He can and will do anything. His ways are not always appropriate for kids to understand any more than His Word is safe for the whole family.
- **Crazy Haircuts - Ezekiel 5:1-4** - *“And you, O son of man, take a sharp<sup>42</sup> sword. Use it as a barber’s razor and pass it over your head and your beard. Then take balances for weighing and divide the hair. <sup>2</sup> A third part you shall burn in the fire in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are completed. And a third part you shall take and strike with the sword all around the city. And a third part you shall scatter to the wind, and I will unsheathe the sword<sup>43</sup> after them. <sup>3</sup> And you shall take from these a small number and bind<sup>44</sup> them in the skirts of your*

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occurrence of the term, the “broth of *piggulim*” is paired with *bēšar haḥāzîr*, “the flesh of swine.” The prophet’s words represent a protest of innocence in matters pertaining to holiness and ceremonial purity, reminiscent of Deut. 26:13–15.” NICOT

<sup>41</sup> “Ezekiel is commanded to procure six different kinds of food with which he is to prepare his bread.” NICOT

<sup>42</sup> “The use of a piercing military weapon for so sensitive a task as shaving the head and beard obviously required extreme sharpness.” NICOT

<sup>43</sup> “Now I will unsheathe the sword. The ending to v. 2 catches the reader by surprise, but it is not ungrammatical. By identifying himself as the wielder of the sword, Yahweh draws attention to himself as the primary actor in the impending historical events.” NICOT

<sup>44</sup> “the prophet is told to take a few hairs and “fasten” (*wēšartā*) them to his garments for safekeeping. Some expression for “hide” might have been more natural in this context, but a sensitive ear will not have missed the auditory connection with the antonym *tizreh*, “to scatter,” in the preceding verse, as well as the identical form *wēšartā*, “to besiege,” in 4:3.” NICOT

robe. <sup>4</sup> And of these again you shall take some and cast them into the midst of the fire and burn them in the fire. <sup>45</sup> From there a fire will come out into all the house of Israel.”

- **Why a sword?** – it’s a rough instrument that’s meant for brutality, so this is a desperate act to use it for unintended purposes.
- **Why a haircut?** – many times shaving your head was a sign of mourning or self-imposed disgrace. It’s removing your ‘glory’ gift from God because you don’t deserve it or want it anymore because of something significant happening.
  - **The hair is representative as well of the Jews in Jerusalem** – it represents what’s going to happen both to the people and the city.
- **3 main hunks of shaved hair** – the full head of hair and beard removed would be separated into 3 main portions:
  - **1/3 burned up in the city** – this is the burning of the city after the enemy breaks through in the siege and takes it. The last thing to do before you go back home from the war is burn the city.
  - **1/3 chopped up by a sword all around the city** – this is those who will be cut down in the war.
  - **1/3 scattered to the wind**- this is those who run away and those deported all over the place.
- **2 tiny amounts**
  - **1 tiny amount hidden away in a pocket** – this is going to be shown to be the remnant that God always protects to keep His promises to Israel that they would always be in the land even if the majority of them are removed. They may lose their city, their temple, and their land, but God isn’t done with them yet.
  - **1 more tiny amount burned** – this was an additional burning to symbolize even more judgment to completion. This is a warning as well to those deported/exiled. They aren’t automatically free from judgment.
- **Does this have application for us?** – I see one: **1.) God always keeps a remnant.** Although His people needed to be judged and kicked out of their land, there were some left. There’s always some left with God. He keeps his marker on the territory. It’s about kingship but even more about promises kept to the Jewish people.
- **Unable to mourn the death of his wife**
  - **The Worst Blow - Eze 24:15–18** – *“The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>16</sup> “Son of man, behold, I am about to take the delight of your eyes away from you at a*

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<sup>45</sup> “This action serves as a warning to complacent exiles. By tucking the remnants of hair away in his garment, Ezekiel had indeed announced that the future of God’s people lay with the exiles. However, simply to have survived the conflagration in the city, the sword of the enemy, and dispersion among the nations should not be interpreted as a guarantee of safety. The fire that had begun in Jerusalem would spread to the entire house of Israel, even to those in exile.” NICOT

stroke;<sup>46</sup> yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down.<sup>47</sup>  
<sup>17</sup> Sigh, but not aloud;<sup>48</sup> make no mourning for the dead.<sup>49</sup> Bind on your turban<sup>50</sup>  
 and put your shoes on your feet; do not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of  
 men.”<sup>18</sup> So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife<sup>51</sup> died.  
 And on the next morning I did as I was commanded.”

- **The timing of it all** – The timing is critical. **Nebuchadnezzar’s siege has been laid and the city is for sure going to fall.** They have an impending doom as this last hit comes in symbolically.
- **He had a wife?** – it’s tempting to believe that this odd guy with a weird assignment wasn’t married. **We assume he’s a single hermit guy but he’s not.** Also it’s sweet that he loves his wife so much. It’s almost like how I feel when I read that Peter the Apostle was married. It seems really unrealistic and difficult considering their ministries.
- **Why his wife?**<sup>52</sup> – she was the ‘delight of Ezekiel’s eyes’. How Ezekiel viewed her, is **how God viewed the temple.**
- **What do you mean no mourning?**<sup>53</sup> – **unlike Western culture, the Eastern culture is VERY public with their displays of mourning for two reasons:** 1.) honoring the deceased – showing how important they are; 2.) processing mourning personally and having people come around to comfort. They were trained to process grief in this way but Ezekiel was told NOT to do this.
- **Would God really ask this?**<sup>54</sup> – yes, but again we need to remember this is a one-off, strange assignment. This is NOT the norm.
- **Does this have application for us today?** – I see one glaring lesson to learn: **1.) God is serious about wanting to be our greatest love.** Unfortunately we put a lot of things and people before Him in our heart.
- **What it Meant - Eze 24:19–24** – “*And the people said to me, “Will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting thus?”*”<sup>20</sup> *Then I said to them,*

<sup>46</sup> “The word is used of sudden death in battle (1 Sam. 4:17; 2 Sam. 18:7), by sword (Num. 25:8ff.), from plague (Exod. 9:14; Num. 14:37; 2 Sam. 24:21, 25), by wild beasts (Zech. 14:15), and by long-term illness or other fatal diseases (2 Chr. 21:14; Zech. 14:12–18).” NICOT

<sup>47</sup> “The first three commands prohibit the most common and spontaneous expressions of mourning.” NICOT

<sup>48</sup> “These two imperatives permit the prophet to sigh and weep inwardly over his wife’s death, but the remainder of v. 17 prohibits any external expressions of ceremonial mourning.” NICOT

<sup>49</sup> “The forbidden *mourning rites* are designated by *’ēbel*, a technical term for conventional mourning customs: donning sackcloth, sprinkling ashes or dust on one’s head, shaving the beard and hair of one’s head, lying on the ground, going about barefoot, and so on.” NICOT

<sup>50</sup> “But instead of wearing the garments of the mourner, Ezekiel is to don his festive turban... The choice of *pē’ēr*, a Piel verb from a root meaning “to beautify, glorify,” is deliberate. In 44:18 the word identifies the Zadokite priest’s headgear (cf. Exod. 39:28). Elsewhere it serves as a sign of joy (Isa. 61:10) or luxury (Isa. 3:20). Cf. the designation of the founding’s tiara as *tip’eret*, “beauty, glory,” in 16:12. Targ. renders the term *ṭwṭpt*, “phylacteries.” For a discussion of *p’r* as an expression of beauty see Dyrness, *JETS* 28 (1985) 423.” NICOT

<sup>51</sup> “Since the prophet was thirty years old at the time of his call, his wife may have accompanied him to Babylon five years earlier (1:2). In any case, she was not only a witness to his prophetic service; while he performed his duties within his own house, his wife must have ministered to his needs. Yahweh’s use of the expression of endearment, *the delight of your eyes*, along with the requirements of the context, implies a felicitous marital relationship.” NICOT

<sup>52</sup> “Ezekiel and his wife function as surrogates for Yahweh and the temple, respectively. What the woman is to the prophet, the temple is to Yahweh, “the delight of his eyes” (vv. 16, 21).” NICOT

<sup>53</sup> “Although Yahweh’s advance announcement prepares Ezekiel for the death of his wife, vv. 16–17 suggest a harsh reality: the prophet’s personal feelings are beside the point. Yahweh’s seriousness about the theological agenda is reflected in the series of ten imperative clauses, six negative and four positive, all intended to stifle any expression of grief over the loss of his wife.” NICOT

<sup>54</sup> “The price Ezekiel is asked to pay for the privilege of serving as God’s agent is high. More than any other prophet, even Hosea, Ezekiel plays the role of a suffering servant; the medium has truly become the message. Personal feelings are sacrificed that he might in his body bear witness to the inexorable work of God in the lives of his people. In and through his inexplicable tragedy he is called on to point his compatriots away from the temple, the object of their affections, to God himself.” NICOT

*“The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>21</sup> ‘Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, and the yearning of your soul,<sup>55</sup> and your sons and your daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword.<sup>56</sup> <sup>22</sup> And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. <sup>23</sup> Your turbans shall be on your heads and your shoes on your feet; you shall not mourn or weep, but you shall rot away in your iniquities and groan to one another. <sup>24</sup> Thus shall Ezekiel be to you a sign; according to all that he has done you shall do. When this comes, then you will know that I am the Lord GOD.’”*

- **But what does it mean for “us” Jews?** – the people knew by this time that what Ezekiel was doing and what was happening to him was a message to them. He no longer had to get their attention. He had it. They want to know what’s going to happen to them if Ezekiel lost his wife and wasn’t able to mourn.
- **The meaning** – yet, it has a brutal meaning. They will lose their two greatest things:
  - **Loss of the temple** – it will be taken over, profaned, stuff stolen out of it and desecrated and destroyed. The Solomonic temple was the pride of Israel and their connection place to God. They viewed it like the ark of the covenant, protective. It was not just beautiful but powerful.
  - **Loss of their children** – the cost will be personal and deep. Their kids would be lost in the war. Their children would be scattered or deported if they aren’t killed. It was their worst nightmare coming true.
  - **Why can’t they mourn?** – that part is less clear, but I think it’s because they are being shoved around by the enemy and demanded to keep moving. They aren’t allowed the time and space to deal with their loss. Their loss keeps coming.
  - **This is all a SIGN** – God is telling them ahead of time so that WHEN it happens they will know that it’s not accidental, it’s planned. It didn’t just happen, God did it, and He did it for a reason.
- **A Bitter Calling** – **deep study reveals that Ezekiel didn’t like his calling and ministry as a prophet** (specifically this assignment). He was forced to do extreme things that were not only uncomfortable but repulsive to him. The book is laced with resistance and rebellion in his own heart for what God called him to do. **Most times God calls us to do things that coincide with our gifting, talents, heart, nature, and passions. But sometimes He will ask us to do things that run contrary to what we want. We have some choices to make when that happens. 1.) We can shift our paradigm (how we see life) and lean into it, 2.) try to**

<sup>55</sup> “*hinēni lōqēah mimḡkā ʿet-mahmad ʿēnēkā*, “I will take from you the delight of your eyes.” Cf. *qah lēkā*, 4:1; 4:9; 5:1. The verb *hāmad* may refer to illegitimate coveting (e.g., Exod. 20:17; Deut. 5:21) or to legitimate enjoyment (Gen. 2:9; 3:6; etc.). For studies of the term see G. Wallis, *TDOT*, 4:452–61; W. A. Dyrness, “Aesthetics in the Old Testament,” *JETS* 28 (1985) 424. In 23:6, 12, 23 the verb had denoted a woman’s sexual lust toward handsome men. The present idiom is used in 1 K. 20:6 of silver and gold valuables, as well as of wives and children. Jeremiah picks up Ezekiel’s application of the idiom to Jerusalem (and its temple, vv. 21, 25) in Lam. 2:4.” NICOT

<sup>56</sup> “One can only imagine the shock that Ezekiel’s opening words would have had on his hearers, as Yahweh announces the loss of their most treasured possessions: the temple and their children.” NICNT

resist or reject it, 3.) grit our teeth and do it resentfully. Ezekiel is struggling with #3. Jonah tried #2. John the Baptist did #1.

- **What Do We Learn From All of This?** – Is there anything that we can take from this and apply it to our lives? Obviously I don't want the answer to be...how can I make myself more awkward in public. I think that there are a **quick 3 things we can pull from all of this that matters in our day to day lives:**
  1. **We are here for God's use**<sup>57</sup> – it's tempting to buy the cultural narrative that everything revolves around us and that we need to spend our lives trying to fill our lives with everything we want. But that misses the point entirely. Not only will that be a fast road to frustration, dissatisfaction, and disappointment, but it violates our core purpose. **There was a time when we weren't. Then God made us. Creators create things for a reason. We were created to partner with God on a variety of levels. This universe and reality is primarily about God, not us. Therefore our perspective must always be that of a servant with a readied yes on our lips.**<sup>58</sup>
  2. **God isn't concerned about the things that we are concerned by** – that makes Him both **the safest person to be with and the most uncomfortable.** He isn't afraid so He will take on bullies. He isn't insecure so He will walk us into embarrassing experiences. He isn't hesitant so He will push us further than we are comfortable with. Until we begin to value his core values, we will continually be surprised and frustrated by His assignments. Ex: one of God's core values is **selfless care for others like the Good Samaritan.** **But if our core value is to be efficient, productive, and secure ourselves through wealth,** an assignment on the fly to minister to someone homeless isn't going to be answered.
    - Ro 2:28–29 – *“For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. <sup>29</sup> But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.”*
    - Ga 1:10 – *“For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”*
    - Mt 6:24 - *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.”*
    - Eph 6:5–9 – *“Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, <sup>6</sup> not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, <sup>7</sup> rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, <sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. <sup>9</sup> Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.”*
    - **God is less concerned with our cool factor (foolish)** – Should not the maker form the clay into whatever He chooses? Yes. Who are we to say, ‘but **God you are ruining my reputation and embarrassing me?**’ What else are we here for? **We cannot build our kingdom and His kingdom at the same time.** God doesn't consider foolish what you

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<sup>57</sup> Phil 3:7-11 – *“But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— <sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”*

<sup>58</sup> Rom 12:1- *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”*

and I consider foolish. The pompous prancing around in comfortable lives is less comfortable in a room of martyrs than we would imagine.

- **When God calls us to do something weird** – God doesn't consider weird what we consider weird. That means that He is going to have us do things that are counter culture or odd by normal standards. He will ask us to get out of comfort zone. He will ask us to do things that will draw questions from people around us. **The question should never be is this weird, but is this right?** I don't think that we should be uncomfortably weird around people unless God is clearly telling us to be, but if He is, it's Him-first, not us.
  - **When God forces something in our lives that we can handle** – there are times when God does something through us that we do not and will not sign off on (live out a demonstration like Job which is showing the world how a Christian walks through loss). It feels forced, because it is. God needs to do something on the planet and His people are His primary method. Ezekiel lost his wife in what seemed to be a sermon illustration. Why would God do that? Would He still call us to things like Abraham's call to kill Isaac? In a sense yes, but in another sense no. Yes, **He will continue to allow things happen to us that we aren't okay with.** But no, He doesn't tend to call His people to harm others and He doesn't find joy in pain, suffering, and death.  
[COMPLETE]
3. **Both words and actions matter** – Ezekiel said stuff and did stuff. It was actually **the combination of those two that created the most impact.** That is true for us. A Christian that lives a questionable life will not have the same impact sharing their faith with friends, as someone who lives a life for the Lord. At the same time, a really kind, good, caring, and loving person will be seen as ONLY that, with no glory to God, unless we share from our lips the WHY we are the way that we are (and do what we do). **It's the lifestyle backing up the message and the message backing up the lifestyle that hits hardest.**

## Conclusion

- **God's not asking you to do that** – Remember what I said at the beginning of the message today: This is an extreme example and very rare. In the Bible this is kind of a one-time assignment. Although other godly people had difficult and strange assignments, none had any as bizarre as this. We don't have to live in fear that if we finally say yes to God, He's going to have us lay naked on our side for a year playing with dolls at the Galleria Mall.
  - **But He is asking you to do something...**
- **Understand what humility and servanthood looks like** – The point we need to take home is that for us **to do God-stuff means that many times it's going to clash with our selfish human desires.**<sup>59</sup>
  - **Not driven by insecurity** - We don't want to look odd. **We value too much what other people think.** We have allowed ourselves to live in insecurity despite the glorious and solid Christian identity that God has given us.

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<sup>59</sup> Rom 12:2- "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

- **Willing to be inconvenienced** - We don't want to be inconvenienced, but **if we are servants, we serve at the pleasure of the Master.**
- **All in** - What Ezekiel did in obedience demonstrated that **there was nothing of his life that was held back from God.** God may not demand any display like He did with Ezekiel on us, but **we will definitely be held accountable for the portions of our lives that we deem off-limits to Him.**