

The Lord is There

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Date: 21 May 2017

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[0 : 00] Now as we look in this opening chapter and the first verses of the second chapter of the prophecy of Ezekiel, we see that Ezekiel is a comparatively young man when the Lord begins to speak to him and to deal with him.

His name means the one whom God will strengthen. It's literally God will strengthen but with the original Hebrew the whom is implied. So it's God will strengthen or whom God will strengthen. And Ezekiel was certainly going to need the strength of the Lord and not least because whilst we tend to think about the prophets as invariably old men probably with long beards, as we've said Ezekiel was a comparatively young man.

He may have had a beard, he may not have done, he probably did. But he receives his visions from the Lord whilst he is still comparatively young. And I say comparatively because I realize when you're a teenager, 25 seems ancient and 30 seems like practically a pensioner. So everything's relative. The minute you become 31, 30 seems young and so on.

He describes himself as having these visions, chapter 1, verse 1, in the 30th year. Now that doesn't mean the 30th year of captivity because it goes on to describe the 5th year of King Jehoiakim's captivity.

[1 : 25] So the 30th year of captivity. So the 30th year of captivity. So the 30th year of captivity. So the 30th year of captivity. So the 30th year of captivity. So the 30th year of captivity. He is approximately 30 years old as coincidentally perhaps Jesus was when he began his public ministry or is thought to have been in the 5th day of the month which was the 5th year of King Jehoiakim's captivity.

There are various visions over the course of Ezekiel's career. There are 9 of those visions are dated. And some of them, the visions are quite long. We go on over various chapters.

But we have 9 occasions when those visions are dated in terms of the years of captivity. He is dating it from the time when King Jehoiakim, as it mentions there, was taken by the Babylonians into captivity. And then the Babylonians put Zedekiah in place for 11 years.

So King Jehoiakim was reckoned by most people to be the last legitimate king of Judah. And his captivity was one in which almost everybody of naught or nobility or power was also taken off into captivity.

So although it wasn't the final fall of Jerusalem, captivity is often numbered from that time. Ezekiel's not unusual in doing this. So if we think in terms of the number of the years of the captivity of King Jehoiakim, and we know that Ezekiel is 30 in the 5th year of Jehoiakim's captivity, it means that he himself went into captivity when he was 25.

[3 : 02] So he's a young man at that stage. And when he gets his first vision, we know, chapter 1, verse 1, he is 30 years old.

In chapter 8, verse 1, we read that he gets another vision in the 6th year of captivity. He's 31.

Chapter 20, verse 1, in the 7th year. He's 32.

Chapter 24, verse 1, in the 9th year. He's 34. Chapter 29, verse 1, in the 10th year. He's 35. And then there's a brief sort of flashback, chapter 26, verse 1.

And chapter 31, verse 1, the 11th year. He's 36. Chapter 32, verse 1, it's in the 12th year of Jehoiakim's captivity.

Ezekiel is 37. And then you've got a long span of 13 years when there doesn't appear to be any record as to a dating of any visions.

[4 : 01] And then in chapter 40, verse 1, the last eight chapters are this vision of the heavenly temple on earth. Because it's not quite a vision in heaven. It's sort of rooted in the land, but it's almost like it's a renewed land.

And it's a vast, huge temple complex, far too big to be simply in the old earth and the old Jerusalem. And this is in the 25th year of the captivity.

So in other words, he is 50. He gets his visions between the ages of 30 and 50. And that is the last one. Now, although he is a priest, described there in verse 3 as a priest, it's perhaps not insignificant that the Levites, who were sort of the wider tribe of Levi, who did the sort of fetching and carrying and the sort of basic menial work around the tabernacle and then the temple, their period of service was between the ages of 25 and 50.

We see that in Numbers 8. He says, This is it that belongeth unto the Levites from 25 years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

And from the age of 50 years they shall cease waiting upon the service to know and shall serve no more. Ezekiel is not a Levite. He's a priest, which is a little sort of enclave within the Levites.

[5 : 25] So the age restriction wouldn't apply necessarily to him, but it's quite a coincidence. He goes into captivity just when an ordinary Levite would begin to be waiting upon the service of the temple.

He has his last vision when an ordinary Levite would no longer be able to actively serve anymore. And for someone whose upbringing is the priesthood, his whole life in his youth would have been orientated towards the service of the temple.

This privileged and yet often poverty stricken position. And yet that is taken away from him precisely at the time when he might be entering into it.

He is taken away at the age of 25. At the age of 30 he begins to get his visions. At the age of 50 he gets his last vision. And although, yes, as we say, it doesn't strictly apply.

And, you know, there's no temple for him anyway to serve him because he's in captivity. You can almost imagine it being a wee bit perhaps like Sarah, the wife of Abraham, who has this promise that she is going to have the child of promise.

[6 : 33] And all these years she will have been waiting and perhaps hoping and praying. And then she senses within herself the passing of the time when she would normally expect to be capable of conceiving.

And that time passes and still no promise, still no child. And she would think, well, that's it then. The promise wasn't true. All that I have been looking towards, all that I have been trusting in, it has passed from me.

It's not going to happen. Of course, the Lord does fulfill what he's promised. And she does have the child of promise in her old age. God is able to do above and beyond abundantly more than we can ask or think.

And Ezekiel, the priest, who never gets to serve in the physical temple, these last eight chapters of this prophecy, they are given to him a vision of a temple far more full and spectacular and vast than anything anyone had ever built in terms of the earth.

God does not forget him. He is young when God begins to speak through him. In terms of prophecy, in terms of priesthood, he's comparatively young.

[7 : 49] He is at the end of what might be for some their professional life when he has his last one. But God is not finished with him. Ezekiel then, as we have mentioned, was already a captive for five years when he gets his first vision.

And when he receives this first vision, he is, as we said, a priest without a temple. One whose very identity is called into question. Surely, who am I?

Must be part of his identity crisis. I'm born to be a priest. I'm raised to be a priest. Now I'm in captivity. There's no temple. There's no sacrifices to offer. There's nothing for me to do everything I have been brought up to be trained for, to believe.

It's no longer applicable. What am I to do? Who am I? What is my purpose in life? Which of us has not asked? What am I here for, Lord? Why am I really on this earth?

I thought my life was to go in X direction. I thought I had been born and raised to do this. My big hope was that. And yet, for some reason, whatever, it doesn't happen.

[8 : 55] But we think, well, if I'm not that, what am I, Lord? Who am I meant to be? All my hopes and fears and imaginations. What I desired. What I dreamed. It's all gone. It's up in smoke.

What am I meant to do, Lord? What will you do for me? What am I meant to do, perhaps, for you? Such is the, we might say, identity crisis of a priest without a temple.

Still at a comparatively early stage in his life. He's had a quite discouraging life so far. If we recap the history of Judah, we see that the last good king of Judah, Josiah, under whom there was a sort of reformation in Judah and in Jerusalem.

And he reigned for 31 years. He got himself killed in battle, possibly unnecessarily, but in the Lord's prominence, no doubt. That was his purpose. He reigned 31 years. And when good king Josiah died, Ezekiel would have been 13 years old.

Just about the time when Jewish boys would get their bar mitzvah. Just when they would become, technically, men. Manhood he enters upon just as the last good king dies.

[10:08] And that's when everything begins to go wrong. He is followed by Jehoahaz, who lasts three months before the Egyptians invade. Pharaoh makes him a captive.

And he takes him off the throne. Takes him off into Egypt. Then he dies there. He puts in place his brother, his relative Jehoiakim. And he becomes the king for the next 11 years.

But he's a puppet. He is put there to please Pharaoh. And the first thing Pharaoh requires of him is a huge, vast punitive tax. Which he's going to pay Pharaoh all this silver and gold.

Where is he going to get it from? Not out of his own pocket. He's going to tax the people. That is going to be their first experience of King Jehoiakim is being taxed after death in order to pay the Egyptians.

So he does that. But he must also, at the same time, upset the Babylonians. Because in the third year of his reign, the Babylonians invade. And they take off the first load of captivity.

[11:07] And you read about that in Daniel chapter 1 and verse 1. Daniel is in the first batch of those who go off into captivity in the third year. Of Jehoiakim's reign.

Another eight years yet for Jehoiakim to reign. And then when he dies, his son Jehoiakim, who is referred to here in verse 2 of chapter 1. He then becomes king.

But again, only three months. And then he is taken into captivity. And then we can mention the king of Babylon puts in his own man, Zedekiah. And then it really begins to unravel.

Nine years, Zedekiah is on the throne. And then he rebels against the Babylonian king. The Babylonians commonly siege to Jerusalem for two years. Two years is a long time to have a siege. And by the end of it, Jerusalem is completely destroyed. Zedekiah is killed. And the kingdom of Judah is wiped out. But by then, Ezekiel is himself long since in captivity.

[12:07] So it is a downward spiral of unrelenting sorrow and misery and outlook for Judah and for this young priest, for any priest who loved the Lord.

To see the temple desecrated by heathenism and paganism and then to have it destroyed. It's just, you know, you've had the loss of good King Josiah. You've had the loss of Jehoahaz with Egyptian invasion.

You've had the imposition of the pretender Jehoiakim. You've got the tax by the Egyptians. You've got Babylonian invasion. You've got captives. You've got the captivity of Jehoiakim. And Ezekiel himself going into captivity.

It's all bad so far. And you might say, ah, yeah, it's going to get better. Actually, no. It's going to get worse, much worse, before it gets better.

Because all the time Ezekiel is in captivity, he is being given visions which indicate, first of all, the nature of the problem.

[13:06] Why has this happened to Judah? Why has it happened to the Lord's people? It was going to get worse before it got better. Like the alcoholic or the drug addict who is determined they're going to come off what they're addicted to.

But in order to get through to that bright new dawn, they have to face cold turkey. They have to face all the agonies of coming off their addiction and how their body will react to that.

It's going to be horrors that they are going to face before they get through to the other side. It is going to get worse before it gets better. It's not something that can be solved with one more injection or one more drink or whatever.

If you're going to get through, there has to be the tearing apart of that dependency before it gets better. If you're going to get through, there has to be the same thing.

If you're going to become an Olympic athlete, if you're going to do that, you can do that. But it means your diet changes, your exercise regime changes. It means you get all these horrendous early mornings of pounding the track and doing the press-ups and working the gym and all the things.

[14 : 13] And you'd rather be curled up in bed. And you'd rather eat nice food than all the high-energy, horrible stuff that serious athletes would have to do. If you want an Olympic gold, you've got to go through all this agony, all this suffering.

Before it gets better, it's going to get worse. Or the overcrowded household, perhaps. And in order to make space, they're going to build an extension. That's great. But everybody knows that once you start building works in any house, any place, anywhere, there's going to be such a mess, such an upheaval.

So much iggledy-piggledy, everything on top of each other. Diggers going, drills working, all the mess, all the everything. Maybe in the end of it, yes, maybe the house will be much bigger and more spacious and it'll be nicer.

But it's going to get worse before it gets better. And so it is for Israel and Judah. Part of Ezekiel's prophecy is that there is to be a purgation, an expelling out of what is wrong, a detox, if you like, from what had got them into captivity in the first place.

Part of Ezekiel's job in his early prophecies is going to be diagnosis. It is going to be identifying what had brought about these disasters.

[15 : 33] And so if we take Ezekiel as an overview, we see in the first 23 chapters, that's nearly half the book, you've got these graphic explanations of Israel's sin and lewdness, both in religious terms and also in moral terms.

And the two often go hand in hand, if you notice that. That often if people believe that which is seriously wrong and apart from the Lord, then their moral lives will reflect that and vice versa.

You know, if somebody believes in a pagan deity or a prophet that says it's okay to live in great indulgence or sexual immorality or whatever, then they believe that so they practice it.

And likewise, on the other side, if people are meant to believe that which is true and orthodox and good and according to the Lord, but their lives begin to slide into immorality, then you will soon find that what they actually believe about God or about the Bible or about the authority of his word is actually watered down.

It's watered down in order to reflect the level at which they themselves are living. As Paul put it, evil communications corrupt good manners. What you believe, what you speak, what you talk is reflected in how you live.

[16 : 48] And this is likewise the case for the Jews, the Israelites in Ezekiel's day. They had fallen away from the Lord. They had embraced pagan gods and standards.

And this was now reflected in their own morality or lack of it and in their own faithfulness or lack of it, as the case may be. The first 23 chapters of Ezekiel are graphic in their descriptions of these.

In chapter 24, you've got the fall of Jerusalem. Zedekiah, the sort of last fake king there, the destruction of the city, and it's all there spelled out.

That's halfway through the book then. Chapters 25 to 35, God is saying, not only am I judging Jerusalem and Judah, I'm judging all the other nations round about. Tyre and Sidon and the Ammonites and the Moabites and all these other, and the Edomites, they're all getting judged as well.

This isn't just Judah. But just in case people were thinking, well, we're getting it in the neck because we're the Lord's people. What about all these pagan nations round about? How come they're escaping scot-free? It's the equivalent of the soul who says, look, I've gone to church all my life.

[17 : 56] I've tried to be good. I've tried to do this. I've tried to do that. I've tried to be faithful to this God who wants me to do all these things. What about all these people that never go and hear the Lord? What about these people that never open their Bible?

How can I be under judgment? Am they not? And whilst, of course, it's none of our business what the Lord does with anyone else, in this vision of Ezekiel, he is showing, yes, you've been judged, Judah.

But I'm also judging all the other nations round about. As Peter says, if judgment first begin at the house of God, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Let's never be in doubt about what's going to happen with the rest of the world.

But then you've got two little chapters of hope. Chapter 36 and 37. Where you've got renewal of the covenant. The sprinkling of clean water upon the people of Israel.

You've got the valley of the dry bones and a vision of restoration there. And then we go on to chapters 38 and 39. The judgment on Babylon itself. The superpowers who have taken Israel into

captivity.

[18 : 56] That they are not too great to be judged by God. They are not so powerful that God can bring them down. Just as he raised them up. And then these closing chapters 40 to 48.

You have the visions of the temple. A temple which is so great and huge in its dimensions. It's not quite heavenly. Because Revelation tells us there will be no temple as such in heaven.

But when you think of it in earthly terms. The dimensions are so huge. It couldn't fit into the present Mount Zion. Or the Holy Land as it currently is. It takes up a huge swathe.

Of what is presently the Holy Land. Like a third or a quarter of the entire country. Or something. It takes up. It's huge dimensions. But the vision of it is pristine.

And new. And wiped and clean. Courtyard after courtyard. And staircase after staircase. And places for sacrifice. And everything is clean and new and prepared.

[19 : 58] Like a true vision of a true temple. Such as a priest. Who had longed all his life to serve the Lord in the temple. But never been able to.

Such a vision. As would fill and gratify the heart. Of such a priest. And the Lord gives. This description of it. At the end of Ezekiel's vision.

Chapter 48. At verse 35. The name of the city. From that day shall be. The Lord is there. So Ezekiel begins to have these visions.

As a comparatively young man. And if there is a key verse. In what we read. Then I would suggest to you. It is at chapter 2.

At verse 2. And it says. The spirit entered into me. When he spake unto me. And set me upon my feet. That I heard him.

[20 : 52] That spake unto me. Now it is the sense of it. Ezekiel. As though he has been sort of. Almost unconscious. In that trance. In a vision. And then the spirit entered into me. When did God's spirit enter into Ezekiel.

When he spake unto me. The word of God. Conveys the spirit of God. And the spirit of God. Will only ever call men.

To faithfulness. To the word of God. I've said this many times before. But it is so true. It never tires of being reiterated. The spirit of God.

Cannot contradict the word of God. And vice versa. Because it is God who speaks. It is God who speaks the word. And the word is only uttered.

By the breath of his mouth. It is the breathed out. Inspired word of God. The spirit of God. Offers the word of God. The spirit entered into me.

[21 : 50] When he spake. Unto me. And set me upon my feet. That I heard him that spake unto me. In this sense is that Ezekiel for all his training in the priesthood.

For all his belonging to the outward house of Israel. Belonging to the covenant people. He has been up to this point. We might say. Spiritually dead. Remember what the Lord Jesus says.

In John's account of the gospel. Chapter 5. Verse 25. Verily, verily, I say unto you. The hour is coming. And now is. When the dead shall hear.

The voice of the Son of God. And they that hear. Shall live. Well how can you hear if you're dead? If you're dead and God speaks. The very fact of God speaking.

Life into being. Brings the soul alive. Verily, verily. I say unto you. This is Jesus. The hour is coming. And now is. When the dead shall hear. The voice of the Son of God.

[22 : 48] And they that hear. Shall live. And the context of that. If we go back a verse. Is verse 24. Verily, verily. I say unto you. He that heareth my word. And believeth on him that sent me.

Hath everlasting life. And shall not come into condemnation. But is passed from death to life. For the hour is coming. And now is from the dead. Shall hear the voice of the Son of God. For as the Father hath life in himself.

So hath he given to the Son. To have life in himself. And hath given him authority. To execute judgment also. Because he is. The Son of Man.

Now these visions address Ezekiel as. The Son of Man. That's what it says there. At the beginning of chapter 2. He said unto me. Son of Man stand upon my feet.

Now it's no coincidence. No doubt. That this is precisely the title. Which Jesus chooses. To take for himself. Son of Man. Now don't get me wrong.

[23 : 44] I'm not saying Ezekiel is a sort of precursor. Of Christ. He's really sort of Jesus. Before the time comes. Or anything like that. No. But it is no coincidence. That the title. Which the Lord

uses.

Almost certainly. A vision of the pre-incarnate Christ. This is a vision of Christ upon his throne. Before ever he appears. In his body. That Ezekiel has.

He uses the same title. To address Ezekiel. Son of Man. As Jesus uses for himself. Now throughout his ministry. This is what he calls himself.

The Son of Man. The power on earth. The Son of Man. As this. The Son of Man. Does that. The title. Which he tries to use. The good self. Now this vision. That he sees. At the end of chapter one there.

The appearance of a throne. And upon the throne. The likeness. As the appearance of a man. Above. Upon it. And he describes all the glory. The fiery amber. The rainbow. About his head. And so on.

[24 : 37] This is. A vision. Of God. In human form. Now the only portion of God. Which has ever appeared. In human form. Is Christ. God the Son.

How can it be God the Son. Before he has appeared. In the flesh. Well. He hasn't appeared. In the flesh. At this point. This is a vision. It is a vision.

Of no doubt. What Christ. Will appear. Like. If that sounds. A little bit convoluted. God. Knows. How his Son.

Will appear. When he comes. Upon the earth. God. Knows. Already. The form. That he will take. What he will look like. What his appearance. Will be. He knows.

Everything about it. Just as he does. For every single one of us. That's what scripture tells us.

Psalms 139. Verse 16. Thy eyes did see. My substance.

[25 : 32] Yet being. Unperfect. And in thy book. All my members. Were written. Which in continuance. Were fashioned. When as yet. There was none of them.

God. Knows. What we are going to look like. How we are going to be. All our character. The number of our eyelashes. The color of our eyes. The skin tones. The weight.

The size. Everything that we will be. And he. If he knows it for us. He would have known it. For his own Son. This is a vision. Of. God the Son. Before he appears.

Actually on earth. It is the appearance. As of a man. Now no man has seen God. The Father. At any time. But Jesus said. He that hath seen me. Hath seen the Father.

It is an appearance. Of Christ. As it were. Upon his throne. Ezekiel. Then. Is given this vision. But then.

[26 : 26] He has to act upon it. And all throughout. His ministry. He is so often. Bringing news. To the people of Judah. Which they are not going to like.

News. Which is not going to be. Happy news. Not going to be. Good news. In the sense of. How they stand. Before God. What they must do. Before God. Their need.

For repentance. Their need. To change. Their need. To come to the Lord. In. In humility. Seeking forgiveness. Ezekiel. Ezekiel. Is an example.

In. What we might call. Dying to self. He himself. Has to learn. About. Letting go. Of all his hopes. And aspirations.

He was born. To the priesthoods. To the temple. And the land. They've all been taken from him. He's out of the holy land now. Still in his twenties. He's never going to serve. In the temple.

[27 : 20] In Jerusalem. On earth. He's never going to fulfill. His priesthood. Even his wife. Is taken from him. His beloved wife. We read that in chapter 24.

Verses 15. Verse 15 to 18. Son of man. I take away from thee. The desire of my eyes. We don't know why. His wife had to die. But it was part. Of the living parable.

Of Ezekiel's sufferings. That so great. Was to be there mourning. And he said. When his wife died. He wasn't to act in mourning. He wasn't to behave. In the usual rituals.

He said. This is what it's going to be. Like for Judah. This is what it's going to be. Like for Israel. When this loss. Comes upon them. They're going to be. So deep in sorrow. They won't even be able. To go through. The usual procedures.

So much then. For his priesthood. But. If he's never able. To be a priest. What is a priest? What do we define. Or understand. As a priest. Surely. It is one.

[28 : 17] Who goes. Between. A God. And his people. A priest. Is one. Who acts. Almost as. As an intermediary. Representing the God. To the people.

And representing the people. To their God. Whether it was the pagan priests. Of all the false gods. Of all the nations around the world. Or the true priests. That God ordained. From Aaron. And his sons.

Of which Ezekiel. Was one. Their function. Was to minister. In the tabernacle. Of the temple. To minister. The things of God. To the people. And to come before God.

On behalf of the people. With the sacrifices. That God had stipulated. So he is one. Who is an intermediary. One who goes between. God. And his people. And of course.

We know ultimately. There is only one. Eventual such. Intermediary. Timothy tells us. First Timothy. Chapter 2. Verse 5. There is one God. And one mediator. Between God and man. The man Christ Jesus.

[29 : 13] But all of the Old Testament. Priesthood is pointing forward. To that. Likewise. A priest is by definition. Somebody who offers up. Sacrifice. A priest doesn't just act.

As an intermediary. He offers. Sacrifice. For there to be a priesthood. There must be sacrifice. For there to be sacrifice. There must be an altar. This is one reason. Of course.

Why now. Under the gospel. Under the New Testament. There ought. Never to be. Such a thing. As a priesthood. Because there is no longer. Any sacrifice.

Of any kind. There ought. Never to be. In any church of God. Such a thing. As an altar. Because there is no place. Of sacrifice. Anymore. Nor is there any need.

For a priesthood. Anymore. Other than the priesthood. Of all believers. Because the once. And for all. Sacrifice. Has been offered up. Now at Calvary.

[30 : 09] The only altar. That we recognize. Now under the gospel. Is that of the cross. Of Calvary itself. Where the once. And for all sacrifice. Has been offered up.

If then. He is a priest. What is the sacrifice. That Ezekiel. Can offer up. In the calling. That he is given. And the calling.

To which. We are all. Ultimately. Invited. To follow. It is. I would suggest. To you. The sacrifice. Of himself. And that.

Likewise. Is the sacrifice. To which we are called. Romans chapter 12. Verse 1. I beseech you.

Therefore. Reverend. By the mercies. Of God. That ye present. Your bodies. A living.

Sacrifice. Holy. Acceptable. Unto God. Which is. Your reasonable. Service. And be not. Conformed.

To this world. That be ye. Transformed.

[31 : 03] By the renewing. Of your mind. That ye may prove. What is that good. And acceptable.

And perfect. Will of God. For I say. Through the grace. Given unto me. To every man. There is among you. Not to think of himself.

More highly. Than he ought to think. But to think soberly. According as God. Hath dealt to every man. The measure of faith. Now our tendency. Of course.

Is to think of ourselves. More highly. Than we ought to think. Our tendency. Is to think. Lord. How could you let this. Happen to me. Why didn't I get to do. That thing I wanted.

Why wasn't I able. To fulfill my dreams. Fulfill my ambitions. Why wasn't I able. To be. All that I wanted to be. Lord. You owe me. Lord. I should have been able.

To do it. You should have helped me. We think of ourselves. More highly. Than we ought to think. Rather than recognize. What Christ. Has done for us. And what we owe.

[31 : 59] To him. Part of Ezekiel's ministry. Was to show. To Israel. Look. This is how bad you are. Before God. This is what you have actually. Been doing.

This is what you ought to have been doing. And this is what you should have been doing.

Nevertheless. We tend to think. Not in terms of sacrifice. Of our lives. To the Lord. But rather. In terms of what God owes me.

What were the dreams. That you cherished. The hopes. With which you perhaps. Set out. On adulthood. Someone indeed. Have been fulfilled. Many may have been denied.

To you. Providences. You would not have welcomed. Sorrows. You would not have chosen. But the more closely. We follow Christ. The more we offer up. Our bodies.

Our lives. As a living sacrifice. Holy. Acceptable. Unto God. Which is a reasonable service. As Ezekiel was called. To offer up his life. His self. His body.

[32 : 56] His happiness. In the service. Of God's. The more closely. We follow Christ. Yes. The harder. The road. Will become. When the athlete.

Is called upon. To push himself. Or herself. The coach. Is going to say. Hey. You've done really well. Now that's fantastic. Look at that timing. Off you go. And relax. Have a burger. And a bag of chips.

And a Coke. And just relax. Put your feet up. He's going to say. No that's brilliant. That's great. You've gone so far. Now we want to break that record. Now we want to go for the next one.

Because so and so. From the neighbouring country. He or she.

They've already broken this record. If you're going to chase their heels. You're going to do the next one. Let's go for the next record. Let's go for the next stage. You're ready for the next stage. It's going to get harder. It's going to get tougher.

If you're going to strive for excellence. It's always going to be uphill. It is always going to become harder. But through. And though the sufferings may become greater and more intense.

[33 : 53] The more deeply. Like for Ezekiel. The more deeply they will be sanctified to you. The more keenly noted in God's ledger of our love for him.

The more abundantly they will be repaid. For God is no man's better. Scotland may well get worse like Judah did.

Before ever it gets better. There is a purging and a detoxing to be done. Before the diagnosis of our condition will ever be received or accepted.

Let alone barefoot. But in your own life. And that of your mission. The ultimate question is not. How can I avoid suffering? But rather.

If suffering there must be. And which life is not. Replete with suffering. Show me a life that doesn't have any suffering in it. And I'll show you if somebody is trying to live a lie.

[34 : 53] There is always going to be pain. In this fallen world. There is always going to be suffering. Even if you have everything going great. And everything falls into your lap in life.

And you meet the love of your life. So young. Your childhood sweetheart. You have a long happy life together. One of you is going to die first. And the heartbreak will be the more intense.

Because of the intensity of the love that would have been before. If you are rich. Then the sorrow of having to leave it all behind. And not take it with you. Will be intensified by the fact of how much you had.

And the sorrow of how perhaps might I have used this wealth. Rather than what I have done with it.

There is always going to be sorrow. There is always going to be suffering.

In this world. The question is not how can I avoid suffering. But rather if suffering there must be.

How can I make it count? How can I make my life count?

[35 : 49] How can I make the tears of my heart and my eyes. And the sorrow of my days count?

How can I give it a purpose? How can I, as Jesus taught his disciples.

Gather up the fragments. Let nothing be lost. Well this is how. You dedicate. And you devote.

This life. To the Lord. As he healed it. In the midst of all his sorrows. See the good. Coming out of the grief.

The sacred. Emerging from the sorrow. And the triumph being glimpsed. Through the tears. In Ezekiel's final vision. We see one of the restored temple.

A wondrous vision. Sorrowing. Unfulfilled. Unfulfilled. Priest. Sees this final vision of the temple.

And it's not quite in heaven. Because we say there's no temple there.

[36 : 50] Because it's all. The presence of the Lord there. Just as there's no Sabbath. Technically.

Because it's all. A Sabbath in heaven. But what do we see? We see this. It was round about.

18,000 measures. The name. The character. The identity. Of the city. Shall be. The Lord is there.

This was the ultimate.

Prize of the temple. Of the tabernacle of heaven. That the Lord should be. In the midst of his people. Now our great prize. Is that one day.

We shall be with him. In the midst of his presence. And for now. He has promised to be with us.

Where we are. But the more we seek ourselves. And our own comfort.

And our own lives. The further we drift from him. The more we are insulated. The more layers we put. Between ourselves. And our God. Be prepared.

[37 : 45] To have it stripped away. Be prepared. To have the suffering. Exposed. That it may be able. To be made. To cut. Every tear. To be bottled.

Every sigh. To be recorded. All the sorrow. And grief. Of Ezekiel's life. And ministry. Is reflected. In something. Of our own. Make it.

Count. Give it. To the Lord. See the purpose. Fulfilled. Come out of it. And at the end of the day. We too shall see.

The Lord is there. The Lord was there. All along. Lord is there. Lord. Go by. Amen.