



# Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



## Episode 096 - The Mad Prophet (Ezekiel 34 and 37)

Jeremiah remained with the few people left behind in Jerusalem, while Ezekiel went with the exiles into Babylon. Since they knew the temple was still standing, the exiles hoped their time in Babylon would be brief. But through a series of strange demonstrations Ezekiel made it clear Jerusalem would be conquered by the Babylonians again, and this time they would lay it waste, destroying the temple and sending the people of Judah into exile for 70 years.

- Describe a difficult change that came in your life which you hoped would be brief, but turned out to be a long-term and life-changing event.
- What struggles did that experience create for your faith?
- How did you learn to accept the changes and live with them?

To overcome the exiles' denial, Ezekiel did many things. In chapter four he builds a model of a besieged city and lays on his side for 430 days watching the "battle." In chapter five he cuts off his hair and beard: he burns a third of it in fire, cuts a third of it with his sword and scatters the rest around him, saving back only a small remnant. Then he pulls that out and does the whole thing all over again. Still later in chapter 12 he packs his bags like a refugee, digs a hole through his wall and walks off into exile.

Hebrews 1:1 says, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets." Consider the many, different styles of prophets we have seen.

- How does the difference between the various prophets and their individual styles show God's desire to have all people know and believe His message?
- What does that show about our witness to the various people God has brought into our lives?

Finally in Ezekiel 33:21 a fugitive reaches Ezekiel with word that Jerusalem had been struck down. The exiles' hopes for the future are dashed. From here on Ezekiel's message points from God's judgment to His mercy, promising to bring them home when the time is right, and to send His promised Messiah. In chapter 37 Ezekiel does both—in the first half his vision of the Valley of Dry Bones promises Judah's return from exile, while verses 15-28 promise the Messiah who is called "My servant David" after Jesus' ancestor King David. From the beginning of his ministry, John preached the same thing Ezekiel did: ... "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Matthew 3:2b).

- Judah was exiled or driven out of its home because of its sins. What "exiles" has your sin brought on you (broken relationships, lost opportunities, etc.)?
- How does God bring good out of these self-inflicted exiles when we repent?

Jesus' Kingdom and His righteous rule remain with us through His Word and Sacraments. He gathers His people together and leads us up from exile and on our way to the Promised Land.

- How does Ezekiel's picture of being in exile and returning home help make sense out of living in this world of hurts and sorrows?
- Describe how the promise of Jesus' return transforms our lives here and now.