SERMON:

Ezekiel 4-5

God's Declaration:

I Am Present

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Ezekiel calls us to remember we are <u>exiles</u> and as <u>exiles</u> to remember that God is <u>near</u> and is infinitely concerned for His own <u>glory</u>.

Therefore Ezekiel calls us to refuse the <u>temptation</u> to place our <u>hope</u> in an imagined <u>past</u> or an alluring <u>present</u> but instead to <u>repent</u> and to <u>wait</u> for God's future <u>salvation</u>.

Outline:

I.	God is Present in Exile	Ezekiel 1-3
II.	God is Present to Judge in Judah	Ezekiel 4-24

III. God is Present to Judge the Nations Ezekiel 25-32

IV. God is Present to Save His People Ezekiel 33-48

Outline:

- I. God is Present in Exile
 - A. God's Glory Appears
 - B. God's Messenger Appointed

Ezekiel 1

Ezekiel 2-3

Outline:

- I. God is Present in Exile
- II. God is Present to Judge in Judah
 - A. God's Declaration: I am Present

Ezekiel 4-5

Proposition: God <u>warns</u> the exiles what the <u>fate</u> of <u>Jerusalem</u> is. Therefore, they should not hope in <u>Jerusalem</u> and pursue a <u>superficial</u> godliness. Instead, they should <u>run</u> from all that <u>Jerusalem</u> represents.

- A. The Text: A Judgment Against Jerusalem
- B. The Context: Why Jerusalem?
- C. Ezekiel and the 21st Century: Applying Text and Context

THE TEXT

A Judgment Against Jerusalem

l. God has been <u>present</u> as a <u>witness</u> to <u>iniquity</u>

EZEKIEL 4:1-3

A Sign Act: Divine "Street Theater"

Ezekiel was to act out the siege of Jerusalem

1 "And you, son of man, take a brick and lay it before you, and engrave on it a city, even Jerusalem.2 And put siegeworks against it, and build a siege wall against it, and cast up a mound against it. Set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it all around.3 And you, take an iron griddle, 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. Ezekiel represented God: He was present

EZEKIEL 4:4-8

⁴ "Then lie on your left side, and place the punishment of the house of Israel upon it. For the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their punishment. For I assign to you a number of days, 390 days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment. So long shall you bear the punishment of the house of Israel. 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. And you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, with your arm bared, and you shall prophesy against the city.8 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.

- 1. God has been <u>present</u> as a <u>witness</u> to <u>iniquity</u>
 - a. 390 days/years for Israel an estimate of how long the first temple stood (~966 BC to 586 BC)
 - b. For 390 years, God's presence had been with Israel in Jerusalem in a special way, but during that time God had endured their wickedness and witnessed their iniquity
 - c. Ezekiel's first message was that God <u>had been</u>

 <u>present</u> God saw the iniquity of Israel and Judah
 and had endured it for generation after generation

EZEKIEL 5:5-6

⁵ "Thus says the Lord GOD: This is Jerusalem. I have set her in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. 6 And she has rebelled against my rules by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against my statutes more than the countries all around her; for they have rejected my rules and have not walked in my statutes.

- 1. God has been <u>present</u> as a <u>witness</u> to <u>iniquity</u>
- 2. God is present to visit iniquity upon Jerusalem

EZEKIEL 4:4-8

Ezekiel was not only to "bear" but also to "place" the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it

4 "Then lie on your left side, and place the punishment of the house of Israel upon it. For the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their punishment. 5 For I assign to you a number of days, 390 days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment. So long shall you bear the punishment of the house of Israel. 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. And you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, with your arm bared, and you shall prophesy against the city.8 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.

- 1. God has been present as a witness to iniquity
- 2. God is present to visit iniquity upon Jerusalem
 - a. 40 days/years for Judah approximately one generation, the time of the exile (~586 BC to 536 BC)
 - b. 40 days/years for Judah also parallel to the 40 years in the wilderness in Numbers, the destruction of a faithless generation
 - c. Ezekiel's second message is that God was present and was now going to visit Jerusalem's iniquity on her

- 1. God has been present as a witness to iniquity
- 2. God is present to visit iniquity upon Jerusalem
 - d. 430 days/years total 430 years being the time of the exile in Egypt (Exodus 12:40, Galatians 3:17)
 - e. Ezekiel's second message is centered on a new exile, God had endured their iniquity long enough, He would endure it no more

EZEKIEL 4:9-13

⁹ "And you, take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and emmer, and put them into a single vessel and make your bread from them. During the number of days that you lie on your side, 390 days, you shall eat it. 10 And your food that you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; from day to day you shall eat it.11 And water you shall drink by measure, the sixth part of a hin, from day to day you shall drink. 12 And you shall eat it as a barley cake, baking it in their sight on human dung." And the LORD said, "Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread unclean, among the nations where I ll drive them.

EZEKIEL 4:14-17

¹⁴ 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 or was torn by beasts, nor has tainted meat come into my mouth."15 Then he said to me, "See, I assign to you cow's dung instead of human dung, on which you may prepare your bread."16 Moreover, he said to me, "Son of man, behold, I will break the supply of bread in Jerusalem. They shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and they shall drink water by measure and in dismay. 17 Will do this that they may lack bread and water, and look at one another in dismay, and rot away because of their punishment.

EZEKIEL 5:7-8

⁷Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you are more turbulent than the nations that are all around you, and have not walked in my statutes or obeyed my rules, and have not even acted according to the rules of the nations that are all around you,⁸ therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, even I, am against you. And I will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations.

- 1. God has been <u>present</u> as a <u>witness</u> to <u>iniquity</u>
- 2. God is present to visit iniquity upon Jerusalem
- 3. God will be present to bring terrible destruction

God was going to desecrate them

EZEKIEL 4:12-15

12 And you shall eat it as a barley cake, baking it in their sight on human dung." 13 And the LORD said, "Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread unclean, among the nations where I will drive them." 14 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 or was torn by beasts, nor has tainted meat come into my mouth."15 Then he said to me, "See, I assign to you cow's dung instead of human dung, on which you may prepare your bread."

EZEKIEL 5:1-4

1"And you, O son of man, take a sharp 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. 2 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 after them. 3 And you shall take from these a small number and bind them in the skirts of your robe. 4 And of these again you shall take some and cast them into the midst of the fire and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will come out into all the house of Israel.

EZEKIEL 5:9-12

⁹ And because of all your abominations I will do with you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again. 10 Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers. And I will execute judgments on you, and any of you who survive I will scatter to all the winds. 11 Therefore, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will withdraw. My eye will not spare, and I will have no pity. 12 A third part of you shall die of pestilence and be consumed with famine in your midst; a third part shall fall by the sword all around you; and a third part I will scatter to all the winds and will unsheathe the sword after them.

- 1. God has been present as a witness to iniquity
- 2. God is present to visit iniquity upon Jerusalem
- 3. God will be present to bring terrible destruction
- 4. Then God will be known as God

EZEKIEL 5:13(7) A main theme of Ezekiel: God will pursue His glory They were God's people, but disregarded and misrepresented God

13 "Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them and satisfy myself. And they shall know that I am the LORD---that I have spoken in my jealousy---when I spend my fury upon them. 14 Moreover, I will make you a desolation and an object of reproach among the nations all around you and in the sight of all who pass by. 15 You shall be a reproach and a taunt, a warning and a horror, to the nations all around you, when I execute judgments on you in anger and fury, and with turious rebukes---I am the LORD; I have spoken---16 when I send against you the deadly arrows of famine, arrows for destruction, which I will send to destroy you, and when I bring more and more famine upon you and break your supply of bread. 17 I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will rob you of your children. Pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword upon you. I am the LORD; I have spoken."

- 1. God has been present as a witness to iniquity
- 2. God is present to visit iniquity upon Jerusalem
- 3. God will be present to bring terrible destruction
- 4. Then God will be known as God

KIDS' QUESTION:

WAS GOD PRESENT?

Yes, God was present to see and judge sin.

THE CONTEXT

Why Jerusalem?

THE CONTEXT: WHY JERUSALEM?

- A large part of the Ezekiel's book is a series of prophecies against Jerusalem
- But Ezekiel prophesied near Babylon in exile he never went to Jerusalem and there is no evidence that Ezekiel's prophecies ever made it to Jerusalem
- So, a central question of Ezekiel's book is why is Ezekiel prophesying about Jerusalem to exiles?

THE CONTEXT: WHY JERUSALEM?

- 1. Exile was a confusing experience: what did it mean to be
 God's people?
 A common misconceived dualism among God's people in all ages
- 2. The exiles had two simplistic earthly choices:
 - a. Fight the nations under the banner of God's people
 - b. Join the nations and renounce God's people
- 3. Hoping in Jerusalem represented the first choice
 - a. And this appeared, on the surface, to be the godly choice
 - b. Supporting Jerusalem clearly meant they were clinging to God, they were being God's people
 - c. This is what the "godly" Jew should do

PSALM 137:1-6

¹ By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. 2 On the willows there we hung up our lyres. ³ For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" ⁴ How shall we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land? ⁵ If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! 6 Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember

you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy!

THE CONTEXT: WHY JERUSALEM?

- 4. But, did supporting Jerusalem against the nations simplistically represent following God?
 - a. The Jews believed that Jerusalem was inviolable, that God would fight for them and God would win (e.g. Ezekiel 11:3)

EZEKIEL 11:1-3

¹ The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the house of the LORD, which faces east. And behold, at the entrance of the gateway there were twenty-five men. And I saw among them Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. ² And he said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who devise iniquity and who give wicked counsel in this city; 3 who say, 'The time is not near to build houses. This city is the cauldron, and we are the

THE CONTEXT: WHY JERUSALEM?

- 4. But, did supporting Jerusalem against the nations simplistically represent following God?
 - a. The Jews believed that Jerusalem was inviolable, that God would fight for them and God would win (e.g. Ezekiel 11:3)
 - b. The Jews in Jerusalem believed they were worthy of God's intervention because they had the Temple, they celebrated the Sabbath, they had all the markers of God's people
 - c. But these people loved being the people of God, <u>not God</u> they presumed upon God's protection without really serving Him
 - d. They loved holding up the markers of being God's people and demanding victory, but they didn't care about God's law, they maligned God's character

THE CONTEXT: WHY JERUSALEM?

- 5. In other words, there were two ways to hope in Jerusalem
 - a. An exile could hope in Jerusalem as a representation of God's future saving power and grieve over (but not oppose) her destruction as a symbol of God's wrath over sin a mournful yet hopeful attitude
 - b. An exile could hope in Jerusalem as a representation of earthly power, the ability to overcome the nations and be the victor, ignoring or even embracing the evil that was in her – an aggressive and presumptuous attitude
 - c. Unfortunately, the prevailing attitude favored the second: a militaristic, earthly hope for the (amoral) triumph of God's people

WHY JERUSALEM? A WARNING TO EXILES

- 6. So hoping in and supporting Jerusalem was not the godly thing
 - a. It might appear to be godly, but in reality, it was godless
 - b. It valued the earthly power of the "kingdom of God" more than it valued God the King
 - c. The Kingdom of God could not be found and could not be defended by those who were completely lacking God's character – this would be a <u>wild misrepresentation</u> of God
- 7. Jerusalem represented seeking earthly power instead of God
 - a. They were ready to set aside God's law and character to pursue "God's" kingdom in this world
 - b. They weren't really hoping God would win, they were hoping that they would win they believed that God was for them, so it didn't matter how they lived, they believed they should win

WHY JERUSALEM? A WARNING TO EXILES

- 8. This is why Ezekiel prophesies to the exiles hoping in Jerusalem, hoping in an amoral, earthly fulfillment of God's people was hopeless
- 9. God is going to warn the exiles do not hope in Jerusalem, it is soon to be destroyed, so:
 - a. God is going to declare the sinfulness of Jerusalem "do not pretend that by supporting Jerusalem you are pursuing Me"
 - b. God is going to declare the judgment against Jerusalem "do not pretend that in supporting Jerusalem you will gain favor with me"
 - c. God is going to declare the destruction of Jerusalem "do not pretend that in supporting Jerusalem that you will be spared"

WHY JERUSALEM? A WARNING TO EXILES

10. It would be easy for the exiles to pursue a self-righteous unrighteousness – "I am fighting for God's people" – so God gives the exiles clear warning of where this leads: destruction

Fighting against the nations did not equal serving God

In fact, fighting against the nations under a false banner of God's people was really fighting against God

KIDS' QUESTION:

WHY PROPHESY AGAINST JERUSALEM IN BABYLON?

God's <u>salvation</u> wasn't going to be fulfilled by <u>earthly</u> power and didn't need to <u>ally</u> with <u>evil</u>.

EZEKIEL AND THE 21ST CENTURY

Textual and Contextual Applications

- 1. Textual Applications
 - a. We need to remember that God sees unrighteousness

HEBREWS 4:12-13

¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

- 1. Textual Applications
 - a. We need to remember that God sees unrighteousness
 - b. We need to remember that God judges unrighteousness

I PETER 3:8-12

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. 10 For: "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; 11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

- 1. Textual Applications
 - a. We need to remember that God sees unrighteousness
 - b. We need to remember that God judges unrighteousness
 - c. We need to remember that God is going to <u>destroy</u> <u>unrighteousness</u>

ROMANS 6:16, 20-23

⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ... ²⁰For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.²¹ But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

MARK 9:43-48

⁴³ And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell,48 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'

- 1. Textual Applications
 - a. We need to remember that God sees unrighteousness
 - b. We need to remember that God judges unrighteousness
 - c. We need to remember that God is going to <u>destroy</u> <u>unrighteousness</u>

KIDS' QUESTION:

WHAT DOES EZEKIEL'S PROPHECY MEAN FOR US?

We need to remember that God is present, God sees, and God hates sin.

- 1. Textual Applications
- 2. Contextual Applications
 - a. We need to remember that God's <u>plan</u> doesn't ever <u>depend</u> on <u>worldly power</u>

JOHN 18:36

36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." ³⁷Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world---to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."38 Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

- 1. Textual Applications
- 2. Contextual Applications
 - a. We need to remember that God's <u>plan</u> doesn't ever <u>depend</u> on <u>worldly power</u>
 - b. We need to remember that <u>partnering</u> with <u>evil</u> cannot <u>advance</u> God's <u>kingdom</u>

I CORINTHIANS 6:14-18

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, 18 and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

- 1. Textual Applications
- 2. Contextual Applications
 - a. We need to remember that God's <u>plan</u> doesn't ever <u>depend</u> on <u>worldly power</u>
 - b. We need to remember that <u>partnering</u> with <u>evil</u> cannot <u>advance</u> God's <u>kingdom</u>
 - c. We need to remember that <u>partnering</u> with <u>evil</u> confuses the <u>Gospel</u> and leads to <u>destruction</u>

EZEKIEL 5:9-12 A main theme of Ezekiel: God will pursue His glory
They were God's people, but disregarded and misrepresented God

13 "Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them and satisfy myself. And they shall know that I am the LORD---that I have spoken in my jealousy---when I spend my fury upon them. 14 Moreover, I will make you a desolation and an object of reproach among the nations all around you and in the sight of all who pass by. 15 You shall be a reproach and a taunt, a warning and a horror, to the nations all around you, when I execute judgments on you in anger and fury, and with turious rebukes---I am the LORD; I have spoken---16 when I send against you the deadly arrows of famine, arrows for destruction, which I will send to destroy you, and when I bring more and more famine upon you and break your supply of bread. 17 I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will rob you of

your children. Pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword upon you. I am the LORD; I have spoken."

- 1. Textual Applications
- 2. Contextual Applications
 - a. We need to remember that God's <u>plan</u> doesn't ever <u>depend</u> on <u>worldly power</u>
 - b. We need to remember that <u>partnering</u> with <u>evil</u> cannot <u>advance</u> God's <u>kingdom</u>
 - c. We need to remember that <u>partnering</u> with <u>evil</u> confuses the <u>Gospel</u> and leads to <u>destruction</u>

a. Not worldly power

b. Evil cannot advanceGod's kingdom

c. Partnering with evil confuses the gospel A misconceived dualism

a. Fight the nationsunder the banner ofGod's people

b. Join the nations and renounce God's people

The question is: do we see this today? A misconceived dualism

- a. As exiles, do we experience this apparent dualism as well?
- b. Do we see two "sides" and believe that one predominately represents God's people?
- c. Is the side that "represents"
 God's people marked by
 militancy? An immediate
 realization of God's kingdom?
 Overlooking or embracing
 immorality?

a. Fight the nations under the banner of God's people

b. Join the nations and renounce God's people

If so, Ezekiel's warning is for us as well

- 1. Textual Applications
- 2. Contextual Applications



- a. We need to remember that God's <u>plan</u> doesn't ever <u>depend</u> on <u>worldly power</u>
- b. We need to remember that <u>partnering</u> with <u>evil</u> cannot advance God's kingdom
- c. We need to remember that <u>partnering</u> with <u>evil</u> confuses the <u>Gospel</u> and leads to <u>destruction</u>
- We need to be extremely careful who/what we partner with in the name of advancing God's kingdom.

KIDS' QUESTION:

WHAT DOES EZEKIEL'S PROPHECY MEAN FOR US?

We need not to be deceived by <u>earthly</u> <u>promises</u> of God's <u>kingdom</u> and instead <u>wait</u> for God's <u>salvation</u>.

Proposition: God <u>warns</u> the exiles what the <u>fate</u> of <u>Jerusalem</u> is. Therefore, they should not hope in <u>Jerusalem</u> and pursue a <u>superficial</u> godliness. Instead, they should <u>run</u> from all that <u>Jerusalem</u> represents.

- A. The Text: A Judgment Against Jerusalem
- B. The Context: Why Jerusalem?
- C. Ezekiel and the 21st Century: Applying Text and Context