

THE CRY OF THE LORD



The words of God to Ezekiel - for His people today

1. God is warning us against false prophets

God is a God of order, not confusion. When He speaks His words are clear and simple. They are the words of life and hope.

On all sides today noisy, confusing voices are raised. We are surrounded by false prophets. They speak **"out of their own imagination"** (Ezek.13.2) and **"follow their own spirit"** (Ezek. 13.3).

"They say 'The Lord declares' when the Lord has not sent them" (Ezek 13.6)

God is a God of truth. He is in nature truth. He does not tolerate lies for ever.

His words thunder out against those who **"lead my people astray, saying 'Peace' when there is no peace"** (Ezek. 13.10).

God does not remain silent in the face of falsehood - **"Because of your false words and lying visions I am against you, declares the Sovereign Lord"** (Ezek. 13.8).

God is not neutral.

To those who **"disheartened the righteous with your lies"** and **"encouraged the wicked not to turn from their evil ways"** (Ezek.13.22) he promises **"I will save my people from your hands. And then you will know that I am the Lord"** (Ezek.13.21).

False prophets hide the truth and cover up the seriousness of our situation - **"when a flimsy wall is built, they cover it with whitewash"** (Ezek.13.10).

But God in His anger will destroy the wall - **"I will tear down the wall you have covered with whitewash and will level it to the ground"** (Ezek.13.14).

Throughout history we have seen flimsy walls come crashing down.

Today the flimsy walls of materialism, humanism, secularism and the false spirituality of 'New Age' are ready to collapse.

Already the cracks are visible. God does not tolerate idols and stumbling blocks for ever.

The foundations of a rotten, selfish and godless culture will be laid bare.

Throughout history man-made empires have risen and have collapsed.

The mighty have fallen, the tyrants, false prophets and demagogues have come and gone. The living word of the Lord remains for ever. God does not keep silent. He speaks His word. He calls His people to hear and speak His word today but we are held captive by a spirit of deafness and dumbness.

The silence of the churches is deafening.

2. God is calling us to be watchmen

Throughout the history of the Christian Church God has sent us His prophets. God is today raising up prophets to warn the churches and to warn the nations.

He says **"speak to your countrymen"** (Ezek. 33.1). He calls us to be watchmen to warn the People of God, and through them, the people of the world of the gathering stormclouds, of the impending attack.

The responsibility of the watchman - the true prophet - is heavy. He is called to sound the warning and **"if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet....I will hold the watchman accountable"** says God (Ezek 33.6).

God says to the watchman - **"hear the word I speak and give them warning from me"** (Ezek.33.7). To a divided, decaying, corrupt and dying world God calls us to declare - **"Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die?"** (Ezek. 33.11).

Of each nation which does **"detestable things"** (Ezek 33.26) God declares **"her proud strength will come to an end"**. (Ezek 33.28).

Yet in our blindness and arrogance we act as though this can never happen! The people of God may come to listen to the words of God - **"but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain"**. (Ezek 33.31).

3. God is calling us to come together and be healed

This is a time of crisis in the life of the Church and in the history of the world. The flock is **"scattered" and "plundered"** (Ezek 34.5,8). - **"My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no-one searched or looked for them"**. (Ezek 34.6).

God declares **"should not the shepherds take care of the flock?"** (Ezek 34.2) and clearly states where the responsibility lies - **"I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves"** (Ezek 34.10).

He says to the shepherds - **"you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost"** (Ezek 34.3,4).

Because of this failure God declares that He will take the initiative personally - **"I myself will search for my sheep and look after them"** (Ezek 34.11). **"I will rescue them"** (Ezek 34.12). **"I will ...gather them"** (Ezek 34.17). **"I myself will tend my sheep"** (Ezek 34.15). **"I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak...."** (Ezek 34.16).

God comes to us. He does not leave us alone. Although He recognises our sheep-like foolishness, He tells us **"As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when He is with them, so will I look after my sheep"** (Ezek 34.12).

He says clearly: **"You my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are people, and I am your God"** (Ezek 34.31).

God comes to us directly. God Himself comes to us in human form in Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep.

It is, in fact, a matter of life and death.

4. God is calling us to be renewed

We are in a dying world. It is a world of real physical and spiritual desolation. There is a dry, dead valley. The dry, dead bones of our religion and our idolatry lie on the parched earth. Our situation seems hopeless. The foundations of our civilisation are cracking. Our nations are in decline. Our churches are weak and powerless. Our lives are permeated with spiritual deadness.

We say **"our bones are dried up, and our hope is gone, we are cut off"** (Ezek 37.11).

God says **"I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life"** (Ezek 37.5).

We say we cannot believe in miracles! We deny God's power to heal and to save.

God says **"I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh..." "They will be my people and I will be their God"** (Ezek 11.19,20).

God promises **"I will put my Spirit in you and you will live"** (Ezek 37.14).

God warns **"I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life so that you and your children may live"** (Deut 30.19).

Today, centuries after God spoke to Ezekiel, He is presenting us with the same choice.

He questions us about our real motives.

Do we really want His life to flow within us? Do we really want His Spirit to make us and our churches spring to life?

Do we really recognise the reality of our situation in the valley of dry bones? Do we really recognise the seriousness and danger to the scattered flock of God's people today? Do we really recognise the black and threatening storm clouds that have gathered?

Are we really ready to be set free from our deafness and dumbness, to hear the words of the Lord, to see the face of the Lord?

*Are we ready to allow Him so near to us and our churches, that we may feel His breath upon our lives and receive His Spirit who is power and love? Are we now ready to allow Him to change our hearts of stone? - for then **"They will be my people, and I will be their God"** (Ezek 11.20).*

Our dying, starving world cries out for the love and life of God. Christians have the responsibility to reveal this love and life by themselves being the Body of Christ. There is a deadness and dryness in many of our churches but Christians have been promised that they will be baptised with the fire of the Spirit. Bread and fire can be symbols of renewal. The cry of the Lord through the words of Ezekiel urgently needs to be heard today.

Bread

While the masses
in their spiritual hunger
cry for food,
the granaries of God
are full to overflowing
and we His people
who ourselves are hungry
hold the locks
and keys
which could unleash
the sustenance
and nourishment
to save
and feed
a starving, dying world
of which we are a part.
Jesus says, -
"I am the bread of life".

Fire

We have made of
the fire of God
but a smouldering waste,
dampening, quenching,
the refining flames
which would leap up
and consume the world.
Yet neither we
nor the world
can extinguish
His burning Spirit
and soon or late
there will be
a mighty conflagration.
Jesus says, -
*"I have come
to bring fire on the earth".*