

SRM14024

2/23/2014

"Eating God's Sweets"
Ezekiel 3:3

Attention: How does what is happening in your life affect your image of God?

Is your vision of God different in the winter than the spring, summer or fall?

How has your view of God been affected by the fortunes or misfortunes of life?

Have you ever had your world shaken to the core so you didn't feel your life was on a solid foundation?

Have you ever been uprooted and ripped away from all that was familiar? How did it affect you?

If you were the special effects director for a movie, and had to portray God, how would you do it?

I've seen in the news that there are two films coming out soon based on the Bible. One is "Noah", and some have said that it does not treat the Bible's account respectfully. The other is "Son of God", produced by Mark Burnett and Roma Downey, and is being promoted in churches as respectful.

Some of you may have never been sure there was a God you could really cling to as one who was solid and unshakable.

In times of struggle, we need to feel there is something higher to which we are being called. We need a vision, an ideal and unique image of the future to inspire us to go on when it is tough.

We have had some warmer days this week, but I guarantee there will be reminders ahead that it is still winter, & the springtime isn't here yet.

In 8 weeks it will be Easter, and what a great celebration that is, but will you and I be ready for it in a way that will make it more than another holiday?

Unfortunately, many people think that if they are denied the sweet things our world offers, and give their all to God in Jesus Christ, all that will be left is something tasteless or even bitter.

The way you handle disappointments and discouragements depends much on your vision of God.

If you want to be a visionary, to live inspired by a dream, it helps to look to visionaries of the past.

One of the greatest in the Bible was Ezekiel.

God communicated with this man, and he found that making God's Word a part of his life filled his life with sweetness.

But it didn't begin w/ sweetness.

1. A Vision of God can come when you are in the most desperate of circumstances.

Ezekiel was born in a family of priests, but in his early life, he saw Israel invaded and the temple destroyed.

- Has the "place" where God was real to you been taken from you?

He was deported from his home in 597 B.C.

- Maybe some of you have been thru that kind of loss.

He was called to preach to a people under the judgment of God, & did so for 34 years.

Ezekiel 2:3 (NKJV) And He said to me: "Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.

trans: Whatever your situation, God has not forgotten you.

2. The first Vision we need to have is one of God in complete control.

A. Before his call as a prophet, Ezekiel is given a vision of God as God's glory is reflected thru four cherubim.

Ezekiel 1:4-21 (NKJV) 4 Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. 5 Also from within it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. 6 Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings. 7 Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the soles of calves' feet. They sparkled like the color of burnished bronze. 8 The hands of a man were under their wings on their four sides; and each of the four had faces and wings. 9 Their wings touched one another. The creatures did not turn when they went, but each one went straight forward. 10 As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle. 11 Thus were their faces. Their wings stretched upward; two wings of each one touched one another, and two covered their bodies. 12 And each one went straight forward; they went wherever

the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went. 13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning. 14 And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning. 15 Now as I looked at the living creatures, behold, a wheel was on the earth beside each living creature with its four faces. 16 The appearance of the wheels and their workings was like the color of beryl, and all four had the same likeness. The appearance of their workings was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel. 17 When they moved, they went toward any one of four directions; they did not turn aside when they went. 18 As for their rims, they were so high they were awesome; and their rims were full of eyes, all around the four of them. 19 When the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. 20 Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, because there the spirit went; and the wheels were lifted together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. 21 When those went, these went; when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.”

What a picture! And these are just angels!

Their movement is as a single unit, a picture of God's will being done in heaven.

It is an image of God's great glory.

B. Then there is the appearance of a "man" on a throne:

Ezekiel 1:22-27 (ESV) 22 Over the heads of the living creatures there was the likeness of an expanse, shining like awe-inspiring crystal, spread out above their heads. 23 And under the expanse their wings were stretched out straight, one toward another. And each creature had two wings covering its body. 24 And when they went, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the sound of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army. When they stood still, they let down their wings. 25 And there came a voice from above the expanse over their heads. When they stood still, they let down their wings. 26 And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance. 27 And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him.

A vision of God as a gleaming fire, and of God appearing as a man!

C. The "rainbow in the clouds" [v. 28] speaks of the Covenant God made w/ Noah to preserve life. Ezekiel 1:28 (NKJV) Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD."

D. The "fire" speaks of the Holy Spirit. The light is God Himself: Ezekiel 1:4 (ESV) "As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness around it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming metal."

trans: God may begin to reveal Himself when you are in the most desperate of circumstances. There He may show you His brilliant brightness.

3. When you and I see God in His Glory, it will be the beginning of changing what is bitter into something sweet.

A. God calls us to a world resistant to the word's of God: Ezekiel 2:3 (NKJV) And He said to me: "Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day."

The words Ezekiel has to eat are bitter words of the tragedy sin causes. Ezekiel 2:9-10 (ESV) "And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. 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 and woe."

Sin causes sadness,

B. But He promises to turn the bitter experience into a sweet one, when we make His Word something that is a part of us.

Ezekiel is commanded in the vision to eat this book of "words of lamentation and mourning and woe." Sometimes we see God's Word as that which will only "taste" bitter.

Ezek 3:3 (NKJV) "And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you." So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness."

This reminds us of Psalm 19:9-10 (ESV) the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

And Psalm 119:103 (ESV) How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

C. With God's Word in him and a part of him, God promised to make you tough enough to handle the hard-heartedness of his neighbors.

Ezekiel 3:7-9 (NKJV) But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted. Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads. Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house."

God promises to make you tough enough to handle the toughest challenges this world can bring.

D. His vision of God changed Ezekiel's life.

He is commanded to do 3 things: Eat, Go and Speak:

Ezekiel 3:10-17 (NKJV) "Moreover He said to me: "Son of man, receive into your heart [eat] all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears. 11 And **go**, get to the captives, to the children of your people, and **speak** to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' whether they hear, or whether they refuse." 12 Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great thunderous voice: "Blessed is the glory of the LORD from His place!" 13 I also heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, and a great thunderous noise. 14 So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me. 15 Then I came to the captives at Tel Abib, who dwelt by the River Chebar; and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days. 16 Now it came to pass at the end of seven days that the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 17 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me."

The vision of God turned Ezekiel from a wanderer to a watchman. He was called to watch out for his neighbors; to watch for their souls, warning them of the spiritual danger of ignoring God.

What will this Vision of God do for you?

Will you Worship Him only?

Will you challenge the skeptical belief systems of the world?

Will you love God and people enough to risk being regarded as a fool?

Will you and I receive Jesus Christ so completely that He will have complete control w/ your consent?

Action: Look at your struggles as permitted by God to motivate you to seek a vision of Him.

Ask the Son of God, Jesus Christ, to show you Himself in all His glory.

Respond to Christ's call to Eat, Go and Speak.