**Ezekiel 4-5**

**The Word**

Read together Ezekiel 4-5

**The Big Picture**

God desired for Israel to be a holy and righteous people, and after hundreds of years of continual disobedience, his judgment fell on his people. Even today God still desires a holy and righteous people, and he has given us the sacrifice of his son and the gift of his Spirit to enable us to be that people for the sake of the world.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Read together Ezekiel 5:8-12. As was mentioned on Sunday, this is hard language to hear from God. How do these words and the whole tone of Ezekiel 4-5 match up with your image of God? What questions does this raise for you?

2. Clearly, Sunday’s passage had some challenging realities to it. But what were you most encouraged by from Sunday’s message, and why?

3. Israel failed to keep the covenant with God which ultimately led to the exile in Babylon. On Sunday it was stated that we too are in a covenant with God that, in part, is defined by Jesus’ words, “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15). How does that verse square with how you think about the covenant you’ve entered with God? What questions does that raise for you?

4. On Sunday we discussed the role of Israel as a light to the nations which is the role the church is to have in the world today. As you consider the church’s role in the world today, what is the most important way you think the church should be standing out in the world? That is, what is a specific way it should look distinct that will be the most effective witness to Jesus?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. Ezekiel is asked to perform various forms of street theater (4:1-5:4)

 A. Build a model of Jerusalem and lay siege to it

 B. Lay on his side for over a year as the scapegoat who bears the sins of the people

 C. Prepare his food for that time and cook it over manure

D. Shave his hair and burn 1/3 of it, hack 1/3 of it, and throw 1/3 of it to the winds (and tuck a remnant of it in his garment

E. Each of these actions symbolizes the various forms of judgment coming on the Israelites in Jerusalem because of their disobedience.

II. God’s explanation of these events (5:5-17)

A. God is acting in a way that will make it clear that he alone is God (“This is what the sovereign Lord says” and “they will know that I am the Lord”)

 B. Israel’s disobedience is significant

1. They have rejected the covenant with God. God gave them various “laws and decrees” (v. 6) with “if . . . then” conditions attached, and they were unwilling and/or unable to obey those commandments.

2. Israel has been even worse than the nations around her (5:7). This is particularly problematic because God chose Israel to be a holy people who would be distinct from the nations and be a light to the nations.

 C. God’s wrath is coming upon Israel (v. 8-12)

D. At a future time, God’s wrath will subside and he will be gracious to a remnant (v. 13)

III. This type of language is hard and may not match some of our images of God. But this is a side of God we must comprehend=his wrath.

IV. Application

A. God’s wrath lies on all of us until we put our trust in Jesus

1. God’s wrath was poured out on Jesus at the cross as Jesus cried out “my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

 2. God cannot tolerate sin and Jesus became sin in that moment

 3. So now we don’t have to face the wrath of God

B. When we trust in Jesus we enter a covenant (just like Israel)

 1. “If . . . then”: “If you love me, you will obey my commands” (John 14:15)

 2. But now we have the Spirit who helps enable us to obey

 3. And now we have eternal forgiveness even when we disobey.

C. God still wants a holy and righteous people

 1. We have been set in the world to be the “light of the world” (Mt 5:14)

2. We ought to be leading the world in righteousness, so that other people look to the body of Christ as something to be sought after.