

Sep 12, 2015

Ezekiel 43:1-12

Ready for God: God is Coming

Jonathan M. Romig

Introduction:

1. Have you ever wondered if God is still working today?
2. You've watched the mini-series *The Bible* or the *Prince of Egypt* or *The Ten Commandments*.
3. You've wondered, does God still send plagues of locusts and turn rivers into blood?
4. Or maybe you know the story is about God delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.
5. And you wonder if God still cares about you?
6. Israel would have wondered that too when their leader Moses climbed mount Sinai to meet with God.
7. At our second preview service, we learned the Hebrew word for wind (*rûah*) also means breath or Spirit.
8. The Spirit came as a thunderous cloud at Sinai and the descends on the tabernacle (tent).
9. God's presence lead the people as they travel to the promised land (cloud/fire).
10. Does God's presence still lead his people today?
 - A. God still writes amazing stories today, they just look different.
 1. In the 1960s a man named "Pastor Johnson" felt called by God to plant a church in New England.
 2. He graduated from a seminary in Oklahoma and got in a car and drove to Massachusetts.
 3. Pastor Johnson was driving Rt. 495 when his car broke down at the Westford exit.
 4. A policeman told him about a local family who hosted prayer meetings in their home.
 5. They got the car started and drove it into this couple's driveway, because "Why not?"
 6. This couple and the prayer group had already been planning for a church when he showed up.
 7. They met at the Roudenbush for a while and then the original family donated this property.
 8. They built their first church building in 1972 and that's how Westford Bible Church got started.
 11. WBC took about 10 years to build their church.
 12. Israel took about 400 years to build a permanent temple.
 13. Eventually King Solomon built a magnificent temple (~960 bc).
 14. God's Spirit filled that temple with a cloud like he did the Tabernacle.
 15. I wasn't here the first Sunday WBC started, but I doubt a cloud filled their building.
 16. But I do know that anytime God's people gather together to worship him, he is there with them.
 17. WBC continued to worship God and teach the Bible through the 70s, 80s, and 90s.
 18. I don't believe God's Spirit ever left his WBC people, but the membership started to decline.
 19. Israel also went through what you could call some dark years (not membership problem, sin problem).
 20. They sinned by trusting in kings instead of God, by mistreating the poor, widowed, and marginalized.
 21. They sinned so much a prophet named Ezekiel saw a vision of God leaving his temple (~590 bc).
 22. God left his people and their temple because they sinned against him (Babylon destroyed Jerusalem).
- B. Sometimes we don't understand God's story right away.
 1. In 2001, WBC's roof collapsed because of heavy snowfall and poor architecture.
 2. But even in the midst of trial, God was with this church as the insurance company rebuilt.
 3. A new building couldn't help them recover so in Dec 2013 they approached Immanuel.
 4. One year later they transferred their building to our mother church and closed the doors.
 5. For the last 9 months there has been no weekly service, preaching, worship, or outreach.
 6. In some ways God's Spirit has very much left the building, but now we're asking him to return.

(We are asking God to come back and start a bold new story in Westford.)
(We are asking God for a new and powerful manifestation of his Spirit.)
(I have good news... Ezekiel get's a vision of God's Spirit returning to a new temple.)
(And I believe God's Spirit is very much coming back to this building!)
(How is God coming? This brings us to our text today.)

I. God is coming in glory. (Read v. 1-5)

- A. God returns to a new temple in glory.
 - 1. Ezekiel receives a vision of God's Spirit returning to a new temple.
 - 2. God left Israel's earthly temple but returns to a new heavenly temple.
 - 3. This second temple symbolizes the eternal dwelling of God with his people.
 - 4. When God shows up, the sky rumbles ("rushing waters") and the earth radiates (shine/light up).
 - 5. When Moses came down from Sinai his face glowed with God's glory (Exod 34:29).

- B. God's glory fills us, amazes us, and changes us.
 - 1. We can experience God's glory through worship, prayer, or just seeing God move.
 - 2. My wife Monica and I experienced a taste of God's glory through joining this church plant.
 - 3. We attended GCTS and in 2012 we took a church-planting class.
 - 4. We learned about how to start a real church and had to research a real community.
 - 5. Pastor Dana was just hired at Immanuel and he suggested we research Westford.
 - 6. Three years ago I drove up and down Westford's streets learning about this strange community.
 - 7. We learned there's a lot of education, a lot of wealth, a lot of families, and deep need for God.
 - 8. We took all our research and presented it to Immanuel's leadership but nothing came of it.
 - 9. My final year I knew of WBC and drove by to check it out.
 - 10. I emailed our denomination's president to see if I could replant but he never emailed me back.
 - 11. That year Immanuel hired me and then six months later WBC approached us.
 - 12. This was our taste of God's glory.

(God is coming in glory.)

II. God is coming in authority and in love. (Read v. 6-9)

- A. God is coming in authority.
 - 1. God tells Ezekiel that this new temple is "the place of my throne".
 - 2. In one of Ezekiel's earlier visions he saw God sitting on lapis lazul throne in the sky.
 - 3. God's blue throne is above everything, the earth, sky, and heaven. (Ezek 1:25-26)
 - 4. God comes down from all that and makes his throne with you and me.
 - 5. This is a vision of the end of time, the future, but it reminds us that God rules all things.

- B. God's true authority challenges our misplaced trust.
 - 1. Notice that God accuses Israel's kings of building their "thresholds" next to his (v. 8)
 - 2. When Solomon built his temple, he actually built his palace right next to it ([Ritmeyer picture](#)).
 - 3. On the bottom is the hall of pillars where Solomon judged.
 - 4. In the center is Solomon's House, which had a whole wing for his wife, Pharaoh's daughter.

5. At the top we see God's temple, altar, and courtyard.
6. What do you notice about this picture?
7. The king's palace is bigger than God's temple!
8. Is our goal is to build a big palace or worship God in his temple?

(God is coming in glory and authority, but also in another way...)

C. God is coming in love.

1. God is not only a king, he's a barefoot king (v. 7 "this is... the place for the soles of my feet")
2. When I remove my shoes, what goes through your mind? (comfort, intimacy, job security)
3. When you come into your home, you probably take off your shoes.
4. This was no different back in ancient times (Jesus' washed disciples feet in upper room)
5. God is promising that he will take off his shoes and make his home with us.
6. This is an intimate expression of God's love for us (God takes off his shoes for you).
7. God demands our all but because he's already given his all for us.
8. God came as a man named Jesus to walk among us (King Jesus got his feet dirty for us).
9. But instead of worshipping him, we crucified him, and nailed him to a tree.

(Jesus had to die because God also comes in one other way...)

(God comes in in glory, authority, love, and... holiness.)

III. God is coming in holiness. (Read v. 10-12)

A. God is coming in holiness.

1. God tells Ezekiel to share the temple blueprint with Israel.
2. If you read Ezekiel 41-42, you'll see how specific and careful God's designs are.
3. God wants us to worship him the right way, by worshipping Jesus.
4. God's glory is revealed in the NT just like he revealed it in the OT.
5. In the gospels we read the story of Jesus' transfiguration. (Mark 9:2-3, 7)
6. Jesus took his disciples Peter, James, and John up on a mountain.
7. His clothes became dazzling white and that same glory cloud showed up.
8. Jesus was both God and a spotless sacrifice (holy offering).
9. Only through Jesus' innocent death can you and I be forgiven.
10. Ezekiel tells us to feel shame for our sins, which is the first step in repentance. (v. 10)
11. If you put your faith in Jesus, you too are wrapped in a dazzling white garment.

(God comes in glory, authority, love, and holiness.)

(So now there's just one more question to ask... are you ready?)

Conclusion:

1. God is coming. Are you ready?
2. In the book of Acts we read about the spirit of God coming and filling the church (Acts 2:1-3).
3. Rushing wind and flames of fire, just like Sinai, filled that first church plant.
4. God has sent that same Holy Spirit upon you and me today.
5. If you believe in Jesus, the very power and presence of God's glory dwells in you!
6. God's Spirit is doing a new work in Westford and you're invited to be a part of it.

7. God is coming in glory, in authority, in love, and in holiness.
8. God is coming for Westford, for Cornerstone, and for you.
9. God is coming. Are you ready?

Benediction: Psalm 67:1–2 (NIV) *“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us—so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.”*