

Home

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 June 2015

Preacher: Steve Jeffrey

[0 : 0 0] morning everyone my name is steve senior pastor here at st paul's like to pray before we dive into ezeziel 4 to 48 father god we as we just prayed in the baptism service we might intend to have hope in you but we need your help and so we need your help not just to put our trust in you but to keep looking forward to your promises that you have things that you promised to fulfill in the future for us and so lord as we get a glimpse of that now we pray that our hearts might be enlarged for your purpose in this world and we ask it for your glory now amen hasib hussein was the 18 year old suicide bomber responsible for blowing up a bus number 30 in london on the 7th of july 2005 which killed 13 people one article in london's the guardian newspaper was titled the bomber aimless youth with poor future it suggested that hasib hussein's horizon stretched no further than his immediate impoverished neighborhood that he grew up in the opposite was actually true hasib hussein killed himself and 13 other people because his horizon stretched much further than that and in fact of what he saw as eternity he believed on that day almost 10 years ago now he was carrying out the will of Allah he did not call what he was doing suicide because that is a sin to muslims but shahada or martyrdom he didn't actually believe he would die he believed he would transfer immediately into paradise to receive his reward and for a male muslim martyr that reward is 72 virgins if you're a female muslim martyr the reward is you get your husband for eternity which makes you question why there are female muslim martyrs apparently if you've had multiple husbands you can choose the best one to be with for all of eternity but anyway in response to the bombings the muslim council of britain were bringing in world-renowned islamic scholars to instruct their people that those who commit such atrocities were in fact going to hell not to heaven they declared it was a message that needed to be said in clear and direct language and if there is anyone who uses clear and direct language about heaven and hell it's what we've seen in the prophet ezeziel but how can he be trusted how can we know who speaks for god the creator of the world who can be trusted in this present climate that we live in well in isaiah 41 22 we're given a test for discerning who speaks for god it says this bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen tell us what the former things were so that we may consider them and how their final outcome came to be or declare to us the things to come tell us what the future holds so we may know that you are gods in other words look for prophecy that's fulfilled that will tell you who you can trust the one who tells you what the future is

and then has the the the power to control it to bring it about is the one who can be trusted and as we've seen here in ezekiel for the last three weeks is that that is god himself he tells us what is going to happen and then he makes it happen we've seen so far in ezekiel uh was that he was right about the future this prophecy opened with ezekiel amongst the exiles languishing down uh by the kibar river in babylon and despite that back in jerusalem some of the prominent citizens and prophets were saying that don't worry about that all is well don't need to be too concerned the city and the temple still stood and it's just a matter of time before god's going to come back and put everything right again there's nothing to worry about and we have seen that what ezekiel does is he dashes their hopes in chapter 4 ezekiel pitches the siege of jerusalem in chapter 10 he sees god's glory leaving the temple in chapter 12 he betrays the exile and he fiercely proclaims why it's all happening why has god abandoned his people jimmy baker was a american tele-evangelist who went to prison for corruption in 1989 while in prison he was asked by an interviewer when did you stop loving jesus and he replied i never stopped loving jesus and the interviewer replied but what about the extortion and the corruption and the adultery and the bribery and baker explained i never stopped loving jesus but i did stop fearing him and that's the problem with god's people in ezekiel's time there is no fear of the lord the bible says god says to his people be sure your sins will find you out and they just ignored that they don't believe it they ignored god's word there was no fear of the lord there was no shame for their sin they had domesticated god they thought that god would just accept them the way they were and be grateful for any little bits of worship that they might throw in his direction they thought that god would tolerate them and even affirm their lifestyles because he is a god of love and god graciously warned them again and again and to stop stop it because if they didn't there would be consequences and they would be devastating and he warns his people through his prophet ezekiel and what god predicts about the future he always gets right and so in 587 bc jerusalem and the temple are destroyed their presumption on god meant that their protector had in fact become their enemy they used to sing psalms like 40 psalm 46 god is our refuge and strength our ever-present helping trouble and now they would sing psalm 137 by the rivers of babylon we sat and we wept when we remembered zion they wept in babylon as they looked back and saw the temple destroyed but as we've seen ezekiel's message doesn't stop there in his great love god is determined to bring life to the dead he's determined to bring hope to the hopeless we saw last week chapters 33 through to 30 39 contain some wonderful promises of salvation god is going to come and reign through his great king the good shepherd in ezekiel 34 and when he comes he's going to put everything right he will raise the dead so judgment isn't simply the end of the world it actually marks the beginning of a new perfect world order and so in these last nine chapters of this book

ezeziel describes the vision of that new perfect world order and that's what we're going to see here right now if only hasib hasain could have seen the future in this way he believed something about the future and it had enormous implications for how he lived and he died in the present and that is the vital issue that's before us here in these nine chapters what does the future hold and how do we live in view of that future there are two key elements that i think dominate so we're going to look at two things in nine chapters two key elements that dominate our focus in these chapters firstly god's presence secondly our abundant life that's what we're going to look at so chapter 40 verse 1 open up your bibles we're going to begin there it tells us it's 20 years since god showed up in the kibar river it's 25 years since the first deportation into exile it's 14 years therefore since the temple is destroyed in jerusalem and in chapter 40 verse 2 in other words that's a long time for ezeziel to be waiting for hope in chapter 40 verse 2 ezeziel is taken back via revision for another tour of jerusalem this is the second tour of jerusalem in visions of god he took me to the land of israel and set me on a very high mountain on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city what ezeziel gets here is picture language for something that is great and wonderful and majestic and glorious and spectacular these chapters speak of a perfect world when god comes to rescue his people ezeziel sees here is something of the picture of revelation 21 22 bit of which sam just read out a moment ago where it says then i saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away that that's that's what ezeziel got a glimpse of here revelation 21 a place where there is no more death and pain no more coffins and hospitals no need for endless boxes of tissues ezeziel sees here a glorious future his heart must have left because he knew the pain of being a captive in babylon for 25 years he knew the pain and the anguish of losing his wife the delight of his eyes as chapter 24 refers to his wife what ezeziel sees here on this tour is a new temple a magnificent temple chapters 40 to 42 go into great detail about the size and the furnishings of the temple it's like the grand old temple of jerusalem but only better more perfect if it's possible there is an emphasis here in these chapters on things like the thickness of the walls because this temple is built to last it will not be destroyed again and then in chapter 43 the climax of the tour comes reading from verse 1 then the man brought me to the gate facing east and i saw the glory of the god of israel coming from the east in chapter 10 ezeziel had seen the glory of god depart towards the east and now the glory comes from the east his voice was like the roar of rushing waters and the land was radiant in his glory in his glory the vision i saw was like the vision i had seen when i came to destroy the city sorry when he came to destroy the city and like the vision i had seen by the kibar river and i fell face down the glory of the lord entered the

temple through the gate facing east and then the spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court and the glory of the lord filled the temple then down into verse 7 we see some really good news here he said son of man this is the place of my throne and the place for the souls of my feet this is where i will live among the israelites forever what what ezekeil gets here is a profound vision of hope for the future ezekeil saw the glory of god at the kibar river he saw the glory of god depart from the temple just before it was handed over for destruction and now he sees it again as the departure of god is reversed god has returned god is now back with his people forever and as we know from the bible right from the very beginning that is how god the creator god designed his world he designed it with him in the middle as the creator and for it to revolve around him he is the king at the center of everything that's the world's design but as we know adam and eve although he gave them breath and he gave them the garden and he gave them each other he gave them perfection they didn't like god being at the center they wanted to be at the center they deposed god and the result since then has been catastrophic for the world in which we live it has been a domino effect right throughout the whole creation in genesis 3 we see that the whole universe is cursed because we push god out from the center everything from marriage to farming has been impacted by sin and as adam and eve are banished from the presence of god it seems like it's all over but god doesn't give up on humanity he called the people of israel to himself they were his people he was their god he established on earth what was in many ways a new eden he lived amongst them and dwelt with them and blessed them through the temple and as they submitted to his loving kingship they would be blessed but they kept repeating the sin of adam and eve of pushing god away from the center they rejected his rule and as a result he left them he banished them to exile and there they were by the rivers of babylon weeping weeping it could have been the end but what ezekeil saw in his vision confirmed to him that it wasn't the end god would return everything of the new jerusalem that he sees this new creation would once again revolve around god he would again be the center that is the point that is being made in these chapters everything revolves around god ezekeil ends as we know we said this right from the very beginning with these words and the name of the city that is the city that ezekeil saw from that time on will be the lord is there that is the summary of the whole book god is there at the very center of his glorious world what impact is this vision that ezekeil gets here in these first few chapters the first few chapters from verse 40 onwards have of god's people what sort of impact do you think it was meant to have on them

what effect is it meant to have on us there is something very striking in chapter 43 verse 10 as ezekiel gets this tour of the temple it's not the impact you would immediately think of son of man describe the temple to the people of israel that they may be ashamed of their sin the temple that ezekiel sees here with its perfect symmetry stands for god's perfect holiness and in the light of god's holiness the sin of the people in all its awfulness is meant to be exposed chapter 43 verse 10 is there so that the listeners of this prophecy would feel shame as they contemplate their own imperfection and failure alongside this vision of perfection we make no spiritual progress until we look within and we look at god and we see his holiness and we start to take responsibility for our moral failure when we start to say i have not lived with god as god i have not lived with god as the centre this sense of sin and shame that the exiles were meant to feel as they stood before this vision of the new perfect temple is what we are meant to come into this sense of sin and shame is meant to be the sharp focus for us as we stand before jesus who in john chapter 2 verse 18 having cleared the temple in jerusalem the new rebuilt temple in jerusalem proclaims that he in fact is the temple in john chapter 2 it is jesus's body which is destroyed and raised again in three days and that body was the temple of god jesus is the focal point of god's presence amongst his people that is jesus is the key and all these promises about the presence of god and these promises for the future are fulfilled in him that is by his death and resurrection he makes it possible for us to enter into the presence of god and those who come to jesus are promised in john chapter 10 abundant life and that's the second thing that we see as we move into the latter chapters of ezekiel you see once the king is at the centre everything changes everything falls into place in chapters 43 to 46 there has been a break in this tour of jerusalem that ezekiel's given as he's given regulations for worship in the new temple and the tour begins again in chapter 47 verse 1 the man brought me back to the entrance of the temple and i saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple here is a stream that flows out from the presence of god in the temple out and ezekiel and his guide take a bit of a wander along the river bank for about one and a half kilometres and verse 3 after walking about half a kilometre they check the depth of the water and it's ankle deep then in verse 4 another half a kilometre it's knee deep and the same distance again and it's waist deep

[20 : 10] and the same distance again in verse 5 it says it was now a river that i could not cross deep enough to swim in and as it flows out this river gets deeper and deeper without any tributaries running off in any other directions and notice what happens in the next paragraph the end of verse 6 then he led me back to the bank of the river when i arrived there i saw a great number of trees on each side of the river he said to me this water flows towards the eastern region and goes down into the arabah where it enters the sea that the where it enters the sea of the arabah that's known to us as the dead sea you know the sea that's full of salt and this is the surprising thing the next the next bit when it empties into the sea the water there becomes fresh swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows the river makes the salty water fresh swarms of living creatures are the result where this in other words wherever this river flows everything thrives the dead is given life is given life this is the echo of the river of the garden of Eden where it broke into four headwaters and it brought life wherever it went when God is at the centre amongst his people the result is abundant life for everything that which is dead and salty becomes life fresh and fresh and again in John's gospel

Jesus picks up this imagery from Ezekiel he is celebrating the feast of tabernacles the feast of tabernacles called God's people to do two things it called them to look back and remember the time that they were in the wilderness for 40 years and remember firstly God's presence with them for those 40 years where he guided them during the cloud during the day and the light at night and it called them to remember the second thing to remember God's provision of water miraculous water that came out of the rock and brought refreshment to a thirsty nation and so here's Jesus John chapter 7 he's standing at the temple courts the one that he just said actually this one's gone

I am the new temple I am the presence of God he's standing in the temple courts celebrating the feast of tabernacles and on the last and the greatest day of the feast he stands up and he says in verse 37 if anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink you see Jesus is not just the fulfillment of God's presence he is the source of abundant life it was written of Lord Byron the playboy poet that he drank every cup of joy he heard every trump of fame drank early drank deeply drank drafts that common millions might never ever have drunk then died of thirst because there was nothing else to drink and Jesus declares to Lord Byron and for those of us who are panting for meaning and security and purpose and hope come to me and drink for those who are in that rat race cycle of life where we set our goals and we achieve them and there's euphoria emptiness

Jesus says come to me and drink Jesus says who this is this promise is for whoever believes in me he makes an extraordinary offer there of anyone and whoever believes in him Jesus is the one true rescuer who will provide for our most essential need the presence of God that brings secure abundant eternal life he promises lasting satisfaction in a world that is shriveled and cracked and dry because of human sin that has pushed God out from the center it was ultimately by his death and resurrection that Jesus opens up the way to a perfect paradise that Ezekiel was shown a vision of and again who do you trust for the future whose opinion matters

Jesus predicted his death he promised that he would rise again for the forgiveness of sins and he did it three days later the one to trust is the one who has the power to fulfill what he promises and here he promises abundant eternal life for everyone who comes to him and drinks it's Jesus who promises the abundant life of the new heaven and the new earth that we see in revelation 21 and 22 to all who come to him and drink it is a place that we are told where there will be no more death no more mourning no more crying no more pain no more hospitals no more coffins no more suicide bombers no more evil no more battling for sin everything will be put right it's the guarantee of Jesus because he will be there that is the Christian hope that is the future for everyone who comes to him this is hope for you it's hope for me it's the hope that we just prayed for just moments ago for

[26 : 26] Sullivan when he grows up that he might come to know that hope himself one day and so my question for you is is it in your diary everything that matters is in your diary isn't it well not everything not all my nights are in my diary but you get the point is it in your diary are you living your life day by day with this hope before you in this city that is very thirsty and afraid Jesus guarantees the future he guarantees the abundant life surely the only wise thing to do is to believe in him and live for him now I really hope for you who believe in the Lord Jesus that you will reject the quaint but silly little saying that someone has made up at some particular point that often gets repeated this particular person is so heavenly minded they're of no earthly use it's a ridiculous little saying

I think the exact opposite is the case it was Haseeb Hussein's vision for the future that determined his actions in the present and they had devastatingly bad consequences not so for the Christian the person who knows that their destiny is glorious and certain because of the radical love and sacrifice of a forgiving God will be free to live the most radically loving and sacrificial life in the present here on this earth here's what I mean if someone you're flying along in an aeroplane and someone decides to jump out the door without a parachute if you haven't got a parachute on you don't think I'll save them I'll jump out there as well and I'll try and grab them that doesn't help anyone two deaths aren't better than one but if you've got a parachute on you might just try one of those awesome

James Bond rescue attempts where you free fall like a bullet in order to try and grab them and latch onto them and pull the rip cord you might just try to do that because you've got hope in this thing called a parachute it's the hope of eternal safety and love in the end that releases radical sacrificial love right now the apostle Paul said in Colossians chapter one we have heard of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven heaven releases love it's the assurance of the hope of heaven that releases radical risk taking love and so I believe that this prophecy of Ezekiel as quickly as we've gone through it should stir not just the non

Christian to hope in a world of hopelessness but it should push Christians away from sitting on the commitment fence it should cause the Christian to move away from self centredness and flimsy loyalty and undisciplined devotion and presumption on God's patience over our sin into people whose lives are consistently living for something bigger than self preservation and self exaltation and self recreation it is the certain hope in a future of love and safety and the guarantee of God's presence that releases the Christian to radically magnify Jesus through God centred Christ exalting Bible saturated acts of love and mercy now to a world that desperately needs to drink from the water of life and experience abundant life and discover a great future to aim for let me pray father god our glimpse of heaven is so small and so we need your help to have this future hope take your word we pray and so implant it in our hearts that it just grows so that our future hope and safety in the

Lord Jesus of abundant life would be reflected in abundant life now so that we might drink from you and that we might indeed be the source of living water to many and we ask it for your glory amen your heart your gemeinsam Korean Yo personally■■■ that Melissa Ad ESPN■ a ped