

Marked

Bible Glossary: People & Places

Ezekiel

Sermon Reference

Ezekiel is referenced in the sermon when Dr. Billy Wilson discusses the passage in Ezekiel 9 about God marking the foreheads of those in Jerusalem who grieve over the abominations in the city, marking them for preservation amid coming judgment.

Importance in the Bible

Ezekiel stands as a pivotal prophetic figure representing God's justice and mercy during one of Israel's darkest periods—the exile. His pronouncements underscore that God is both holy and just, judging unrepentant sin, yet merciful to those who sincerely grieve and repent, as symbolized by the mark on the foreheads. Through Ezekiel, the theme of God's presence departing from a sinful temple and the hope of His glorious return resonates deeply with later biblical revelations about the presence of God dwelling with His people. Ezekiel's vision continually reminds believers of the attribute of God that separates His people from destruction based on their faithfulness—a key theme reflected in the sermon's emphasis on being “marked by God's presence.”

Background Context

Ezekiel was a prophet and priest who lived in the 6th century BCE during the Babylonian exile. He was among the Jews taken captive to Babylon after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, serving as a prophetic voice for the exiled community. His ministry spans from the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity (about 593 BCE) for approximately 22 years. Ezekiel's prophecies were delivered in a time characterized by national crisis, religious apostasy, and eventual destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple.

Ezekiel's prophetic messages are known for their vivid visions, symbolic actions, and detailed descriptions of God's glory departing from the temple, judgment against Israel and surrounding nations, and the eventual promise of restoration and a new covenant with Israel. The particular vision referenced in this sermon is from Ezekiel 9, a chapter describing a divine judgment scene where a man clothed in linen is instructed to place a mark on the foreheads of those who mourn the abominations committed in Jerusalem. This marking symbolizes divine protection amidst divine judgment.

The mark in Ezekiel's vision serves both as a sign of God's protection and as a means to distinguish the faithful remnant who remain loyal in heart to God. Jerusalem at this time was steeped in idolatry and sin, provoking God's holy wrath, but the remnant marked by

God's sign would be spared from destruction. This theological motif of identification and protection is consistent with Old Testament practices where marks or signs often signify belonging to God or preservation from judgment.

Moses

Sermon Reference

Moses is central in the sermon's discussion about being marked by God's presence. Dr. Wilson recounts Moses' conversations with God in Exodus 33 and 34 regarding the divine presence going with the Israelites, the radiance of Moses' face after encountering God, and the veil he used to cover his face when among the people.

Importance in the Bible

Moses is foundational to the entire biblical narrative and theology. His leadership brought Israel into covenant relationship with God, and his intimate encounters demonstrate the desire of God to dwell with His people. The radiance of Moses' face has become a powerful symbol of the transformative power of God's presence, prefiguring the coming of Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit that marks believers today. Moses embodies the idea that true spiritual identity and power stem not from human achievement but from God's presence.

Background Context

Moses is one of the most significant leaders and prophets in the Old Testament, chosen by God to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and lead them toward the Promised Land. His life is marked by a series of profound encounters with God, including the burning bush, receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, and mediating the covenant between God and Israel. He is often portrayed as the quintessential intercessor, lawgiver, and servant of God who exemplifies faith and obedience.

A key element of Moses' narrative is his intimate fellowship with God, particularly exemplified in Exodus chapters 33 and 34. Here, Moses implores God to accompany the Israelites on their journey, declaring that the presence of God is the defining mark that sets God's people apart from other nations. This presence manifests visibly when Moses descends Mount Sinai with a radiant face—a sign of having been in God's immediate presence, termed 'panim' in Hebrew, signifying 'face' or intimacy. For the people, this radiance caused fear, so Moses veiled his face, removing the veil only to commune directly with God.

The theological significance of this account is substantial: it illustrates that God's presence is not a remote or abstract power but a relational reality that transforms those who encounter Him. The veiling motif later develops into a symbol of the fading glory of the old covenant compared to the new covenant's unveiled intimacy with God, as expounded by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3. Moses' story captures the tension between divine majesty and human approachability and sets a precedent for future encounters between God and His people.

Moses' role as the mediator of the Mosaic Law and his face illuminated by God's glory established patterns for worship, leadership, and holiness among Israel. His life illustrates how intimacy with God changes character and reputation—an enduring lesson the sermon draws on to challenge believers to seek the noticeable presence of God marking their lives. Moses becomes an archetype for believers pursuing a life visibly transformed by God's glory.

Jacob (Israel)

Sermon Reference

Jacob is highlighted in the sermon in relation to his two key experiences of God's presence: his dream at Bethel and his wrestling at the Jabbok, where God changes his name to Israel and marks him physically, indicating a profound transformation through encounter with God.

Importance in the Bible

Jacob's life stands as a critical theological and historical cornerstone for understanding God's covenant relationship with His chosen people. His renaming to Israel signifies the birth of the nation that will inherit God's promises, making Jacob both a historical patriarch and a symbol of spiritual struggle and victory through God's presence.

Background Context

Jacob, later named Israel, is a patriarch in the book of Genesis and a central figure in the biblical narrative as the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. His life is marked by a series of significant events that display God's sovereignty, covenant faithfulness, and transformative power. One of his earliest encounters with God is the vision at Bethel (Genesis 28), where Jacob dreams of a ladder ascending to heaven with angels moving between earth and God's throne, ushering in a revelation that God's presence was nearer than he had known. He names the place Bethel ('House of God') to commemorate this divine encounter.

Later in his life, Jacob experiences a decisive and intense wrestling encounter by the Jabbok River on the night before reconciling with his estranged brother Esau (Genesis 32). The figure he wrestles with is described as a man but understood as a divine messenger or the Lord Himself. This physical and spiritual confrontation leaves Jacob injured—his hip is put out of joint—signifying that the encounter has deeply marked him, both physically and spiritually. Ultimately, Jacob refuses to let go until he receives a blessing, and God renames him Israel, meaning 'he struggles with God' or 'prince with God.' This renaming signals a new identity, a transformation in character and destiny because of God's presence.

Jacob's wrestling symbolizes the transformative nature of a genuine encounter with God. It is not a fleeting spiritual moment but a profound meeting that changes one's path, reputation, and relationship with God and others. The name change from Jacob to Israel marks him as the progenitor of the nation chosen by God, underscoring the primacy of divine initiative in shaping human destiny. The limping Jacob reminds all that faith and

relationship with God involve struggle and perseverance but culminate in blessing and purpose. This episode also relates deeply to the concept of 'panim' or 'presence,' given that Jacob names the place Peniel, meaning 'face of God,' because he saw God face to face and lived. This encounter affirms the possibility and importance of intimacy with God in life's most challenging moments. Jacob's transformative meeting provides a biblical model for how God's presence leaves an indelible mark on individuals, changing their history and their place within God's unfolding plan.

Stephen

Sermon Reference

Stephen is mentioned as the New Testament example of one marked by God's presence. His face shone with the glory of God while he spoke before the Sanhedrin, and he delivered a powerful sermon full of the Holy Spirit's boldness.

Importance in the Bible

Stephen's role as the first Christian martyr and a Spirit-filled evangelist underscores the New Testament theme of God's presence marking His followers even under persecution. His legacy continues to inspire believers to live boldly and be visibly marked by God's glory as they testify to the Lord at all costs.

Background Context

Stephen is recognized in the New Testament (Acts chapters 6 and 7) as one of the first deacons appointed by the early church to care for the needy and also a bold evangelist and martyr. He was full of faith and the Holy Spirit, enabling him to perform signs and wonders among the people. Stephen's face is described as shining like an angel's when he stood before the Jewish council (Sanhedrin), a manifestation of God's presence empowering and marking him even in a hostile setting.

His sermon before the Sanhedrin is one of the most significant speeches in Acts, recounting the history of Israel and accusing the Jewish leaders of resisting the Holy Spirit and betraying and murdering the 'Righteous One' (Jesus). His words provoked fierce opposition, and he became the first Christian martyr, stoned to death while praying for his executioners.

Stephen exemplifies the transformative power of God's presence on a believer's life—his boldness, forgiveness, and radiant countenance reveal that being marked by God's presence transcends circumstances, including suffering and death. His example is one of faithfulness unto death and witness empowered by the Holy Spirit. His martyrdom inspired Saul (later Apostle Paul) to convert and become one of Christianity's greatest missionaries, affecting the entire course of church history. His presence before the Sanhedrin is a powerful illustration of how the glory of God can shine through human weakness, becoming a powerful witness to unbelievers and advancing God's kingdom.

Cain

Sermon Reference

Cain is used as the prime example of one marked by God's absence in the sermon. After murdering his brother Abel, God put a mark on Cain not to protect him from judgment per se but to prevent others from killing him as he became a restless wanderer, living in the land of Nod east of Eden.

Importance in the Bible

Cain's story is critically important as it frames humanity's first recorded act of violence and alienation from God, exemplifying the tragic consequences of sin and rebellion. The mark of Cain becomes a symbol of divine judgment and mercy intertwined, offering early insight into God's justice system. Cain's wilderness wandering archetype recurs throughout Scripture as a metaphor for spiritual disconnection and purposelessness without God's presence.

Background Context

Cain is known as the firstborn son of Adam and Eve. He is the very first murderer as recorded in Genesis 4. His offering to God—a fruit of the ground—was rejected, while his brother Abel's blood sacrifice was accepted. This difference illustrated early biblical themes regarding faith, obedience, and the necessity of atonement through blood, a foreshadowing of Christ's ultimate sacrifice.

Cain's rejection and subsequent envy caused him to kill Abel, representing humanity's fall into sin, jealousy, and violence. God's response was both judgment and mercy: Cain was cursed to be a restless wanderer and alienated from God's immediate presence. Yet God placed a protective mark upon Cain—not to excuse his sin but to restrain vengeance from others, demonstrating God's control even over justice and judgment.

Following the murder, Cain settled in the land of Nod, which literally means a place of wandering, indicating a life lived apart from God's presence, marked by restlessness and lack of purpose. This exile marks the first person barred from God's intimate fellowship and sets a tragic pattern of sin's consequences—separation from God generated by disobedience and refused repentance.

Land of Nod

Sermon Reference

The land of Nod is mentioned when describing Cain's destiny after being marked and driven from the Lord's presence to wander restlessly east of Eden.

Importance in the Bible

The land of Nod is significant as a biblical symbol for estrangement from God, spiritual homelessness, and the consequences of sin's rebellion against divine order.

Background Context

The land of Nod appears in Genesis 4:16 as the place where Cain settled after God punished him for murdering Abel. The Hebrew word 'Nod' means 'wandering' or 'vagrancy,' symbolizing a state of restless exile and alienation from the presence and blessings of God. This geographic and spiritual location is emblematic of life lived outside God's protective covenant and presence.

The land of Nod is often used in biblical commentary to represent the spiritual condition of those who live outside of God's favor—a metaphor for lostness, wandering souls, and the human condition apart from the divine. It contrasts sharply with the rest and peace promised to those who dwell in God's presence, thereby forming a crucial biblical typology utilized in the sermon to describe the state of those marked by God's absence.

Samson

Sermon Reference

Samson is referenced in the sermon as an example of someone who thought he was marked by God's presence but ultimately lost it because he gave away the secret of his strength to Delilah, resulting in the departure of the Lord's presence.

Importance in the Bible

Samson is an emblematic figure demonstrating the tension between God's empowering presence and human weakness. His narrative highlights the conditional aspect of divine strength, dependent on covenantal faithfulness, and the devastating effects of spiritual failure. Moreover, his ultimate act of redemption points to God's mercy and the possibility of restoration despite past failures.

Background Context

Samson is a judge of Israel described in the Book of Judges chapters 13 to 16. He was set apart from birth as a Nazirite, consecrated to God with strict vows and given extraordinary physical strength to combat the Philistines, Israel's oppressive enemies. His story is marked by incredible feats of strength, moral challenges, and personal struggles with temptation and disobedience.

Samson's strength was directly linked to his Nazirite vow, most visibly symbolized by his uncut hair. His downfall came when Delilah, at the behest of Philistine leaders, deceived him into revealing the secret of his strength—his hair. Upon cutting his hair, Samson was spiritually and physically weakened as the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, leading to his capture, imprisonment, and eventual blindness.

Despite losing God's presence, Samson's story ends with a redemptive act where, in his final moment, he prays to God who empowers him once more to destroy the Philistine temple, sacrificing himself to defeat Israel's enemies. This narrative illustrates the fragile nature of remaining in God's presence and the consequences of spiritual compromise. Samson's life is a dramatic portrayal of God's power working through flawed individuals and the potential for restoration upon repentance.

Samson's experience serves as a cautionary tale regarding the consistency of God's presence and the importance of faithfulness and obedience. His life shows how a person can appear strong outwardly but be separated from God internally, reflecting the sermon's point on the danger of being marked by God's absence even when one appears to be marked by His presence.

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