



Walking Thru The Bible EZEKIEL

Introduction

Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah the second time (597 BC) to put down a rebellion by King Jehoiakim. But Jehoiakim had died (or was killed) and his son Jehoiachin who had ruled only eight months was taken captive to Babylon.

Ezekiel, then 25 years old and in training to be a priest (1:3), was taken into exile along with 10,000 of the most prominent leaders, soldiers, and craftsmen of Judah (2 Kings 24:14). Ezekiel settled in his own house in a village near Nipper along the river Chebar in Babylonia (3:15, 24). He prophesied for at least 22 years.

He was a contemporary of Daniel, both of them living in Babylonia, but we don't know whether they ever met or not. Daniel had been taken captive in the first invasion 8 years earlier and was trained to be a civil servant in the Babylonian government.

Jeremiah was also contemporary with Ezekiel and preaching during this time in Jerusalem trying to save the city and nation. He may have been a powerful influence on the young Ezekiel growing up in Judah and even while in exile.

Zedekiah was then installed by Nebuchadnezzar as king. Eleven years later Zedekiah rebelled again Nebuchadnezzar hoping for help from Egypt. That prompted the third invasion which brought the complete destruction of the city and the temple in 586 BC (2 Kings 25).

God called Ezekiel to explain His actions in allowing the Israelites to be taken into captivity. The phrase, "They shall know that I am the Lord," is used nearly 70 times in this book. The Israelites had been sinful and stiff-necked. When other nations did what Israel had done God destroyed them. However, God did not intend to allow Israel to be completely

destroyed, for there was a remnant that drew back to the Lord and through whom the promised messiah would come.

From their experiences in captivity the Jews would remember the lesson God taught them and they would never be guilty of idolatry again.

Brief Outline of Ezekiel

- I. Call and vision of Ezekiel -- ch. 1-3
- II. Prophecies concerning the sins of Judah -- ch. 4-24
- III. Prophecies concerning foreign nations -- ch. 25-32
- IV. Certainty of the return -- ch. 33-48

I. Call and Vision (Ch. 1-3)

Ezekiel is a book of visions, beginning in the very first chapter. Many of the visions provide background for some of John's visions in the book of Revelation.

The 30th year in 1:1 is understood as Ezekiel's own age. This indicates that he had been in captivity for five years already (from 597 to 592 BC).

Beginning in 2:1 Ezekiel is addressed as the "son of man" throughout the book. This phrase simply means "human being" or "mortal man." This is also the term that Jesus used most often to refer to Himself. The real responsibility of being a watching is found in **Ezekiel 3:18-19**.

II. Concerning the Sins of Judah (Ch. 4-24)

In chs. 4 & 5 Ezekiel enacted the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. The people watched as he measured out a meager amount of grain and water to bake his bread over a fire of cow's dung. He shaved his head and beard to show Jerusalem's disgrace (5:1). All this represented how Judah was wasted away in the siege until only a small number remained.

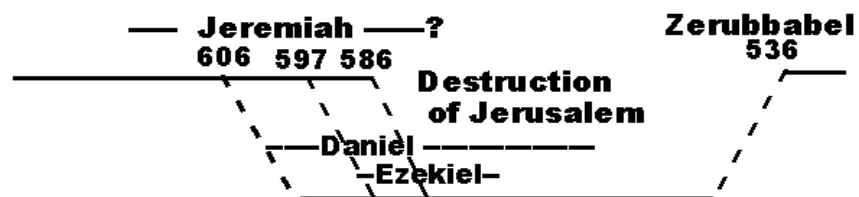
In Ch. 8 he has a vision of wickedness in the temple. Ezekiel is transported to Jerusalem and set beside the temple seeing the sins of the leaders and the people. In ch. 10 Ezekiel describes in vision the burning of the city of Jerusalem. This chapter is awesome in its vision of some angels of God at their work.

Again in ch. 12 Ezekiel preaches by dramatic actions as he digs a hole through the wall of his house at night and carries an "exile's baggage" through it in the night.

The message of ch. 18 is "*The soul who sins is the one who will die.*" No individual's eternal fate is determined by his parents' behavior. We are each responsible for our own destiny.

The Babylonian Captivity

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In ch. 24 we see that Ezekiel's wife died on the very day the siege of Jerusalem began (24:1-2; 2 Kings 25:1). The "delight of Ezekiel's eyes" passed away suddenly and he is told not to mourn or weep.

III. Concerning Foreign Nations (ch. 25-32)

Many of the prophets of the Old Testament addressed not only Israel and Judah but also the nations surrounding them. Ezekiel also addressed the nations of Ammon, Moab, Edom and the Philistines who surrounded the nation of Judah.

Chs. 26-28 regard **Tyre** and what was to happen to that city. The prophecy began to be fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar conquered the city the year after Jerusalem fell.

King of Tyre or Satan? In 28:1-10 we see the reason behind the judgment of God upon Tyre. The passage is addressed to the King of Tyre regarding his *pride* but some believe that God is speaking of the real sinister force behind the king, Satan himself!

The argument is made that God spoke to Satan through the sources that Satan used. In Genesis 3:14-15 God spoke to Satan through the serpent. And in Matthew 16:23 He spoke to the devil through Simon Peter. So, some think, God is here speaking to Satan through the king of Tyre, and describes him before his fallen state.

IV. The Certainty of the Return (ch. 33-48)

After telling Ezekiel that he is the watchman of his people in 33:1-9, he gives a ray of hope in telling the people that if the wicked will turn from their evil ways (repent) they shall live.

In ch. 34 the Lord has a message about Shepherds. False shepherds and true shepherds are described. The true shepherd is a reference to the Messiah.

Ch. 37 is the famous chapter about the *Valley of Dry Bones*. It is a picture of Judah's return to their homeland following the Babylonian captivity. The two kingdoms of Israel and Judah will be one again and is symbolized by the two sticks which become one (v.22).

Ch. 38 deals with the battle of Gog and Magog, two names that are also mentioned in Rev. 20:7-9. Its fulfillment was in Judah's return from captivity and it is used as a figure in Revelation.

The closing chapters (38-48) the prophet refers to the Christian Age ushered in at Pentecost after the Lord's crucifixion.

The Valley of Dry Bones

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Introduction:

1. Ezekiel is noted for the bold and striking imagery of his prophecies and this is one of the most vivid of all.
 - a. Over the prophet's shoulder we see a somber valley of dry human bones and listen as the prophet is told to prophecy over these bones.
2. We stare in amazement as the bones join together to become bodies of men and live again. "What does this mean?"

I. THE BACKGROUND OF THE PROPHECY

- A. The powerful and prosperous kingdom of David and Solomon's day had fallen to a miserable state.
- B. Babylon had conquered the nation and Ezekiel was with the nation in captivity. The nation had disregard God's word.

II. THE MEANING OF EZEKIEL'S VISION

- A. The dry bones represented Israel removed from its land and apparently dead as a nation (Ezekiel 37:11).
- B. By the power of God they were to be restored to vigor and strength and returned to their own land (v.13,14).

III. SOME PRACTICAL LESSONS

- A. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).
 1. Men today dead in trespasses (Col.2:13; Eph.2:1,5)
 2. Continued disobedience result in second death (Rev.20)
- B. The power of God is clearly demonstrated.
 1. The "bones" of Israel were revived.
 2. God is able to resurrect those dead in sin (Ro.1:16)
 - a. Gospel obeyed - Mark 16:15; Heb. 5:8,9.
- C. The Word of God is sure.
 1. Isaiah decades before had named Babylon as the captor (Isaiah 39:5-7).
 2. Isaiah even named Cyrus as the ruler who would authorize Israel's return from captivity (44:28). (Cyrus was not even born at the time.)
 3. God's word, sure in this matter, is also sure in relation to the judgment, to salvation, and to heaven.

Conclusion:

1. Like the dry bones, we must "hear the word of the Lord" in order to live.