

Ezekiel

Visions and Prophecies Changed Israel

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Overview

EZEKIEL VISIONS AND PROPHECIES CHANGE ISRAEL

Ezekiel's story is told in the book of Ezekiel and 2 Kings 24:10-17. Although Ezekiel's visions and prophecies were clear and vivid, very little is known about the prophet's personal life.

He was among the thousands of young men deported from Judah to Babylon when King Jehoiakim surrendered. Until those tragic days, Ezekiel was being trained for the priesthood. But during the exile in Babylon, God called Ezekiel to be his prophet during one of Israel's darkest times.

Ezekiel experienced the same kind of shocking encounter with God that Isaiah had reported 150 years earlier.

Like Isaiah, Ezekiel was never the same after his personal encounter with God.

Although God's messages through both these prophets had many points in common, the conditions in which they lived were very different.

Isaiah warned of the coming storm; Ezekiel spoke in the midst of the storm of national defeat that devastated his people.

He announced that even Jerusalem would not escape destruction. In addition, during this time Ezekiel had to endure the pain of his wife's death.

God's description of Ezekiel as a watchman on the walls of the city captures the personal nature of his ministry.

A watchman's job was dangerous. If he failed at his post, he and the entire city might be destroyed.

His own safety depended on the quality of his work. The importance of each person's accountability before God was a central part of Ezekiel's message. He taught the exiles that God expected personal obedience and worship from each of them.

Time of his prophecy

Ezekiel 1:1-3

On July 31 of my thirtieth year, while I was with the Judean exiles beside the Kebar River in Babylon, the heavens were opened to me, and I saw visions of God. This happened during the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity.

The Lord gave a message to me, Ezekiel son of Buzi, a priest, there beside the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians, and I felt the hand of the Lord take hold of me.

Persecution of Ezekiel

Ezekiel 3:25

There you will be bound with ropes so you cannot go out among the people.

Visions of Ezekiel

Of God's glory

Ezekiel 1:4-14

The voice of God came in the fulness of light and power, by the Holy Spirit. These visions seem to have been sent to possess the prophet's mind with great and high thoughts of God. To strike terror upon sinners. To speak comfort to those that feared God, and humbled themselves.

The first part of the vision, which represents God as attended and served by a vast company of angels, who are all his messengers, his ministers, doing his commandments.

Ezekiel 8:1-6

The Idolatries Committed by the Jewish Rulers

The glorious personage Ezekiel beheld in vision, seemed to take hold upon him, and he was conveyed in spirit to Jerusalem.

There, in the inner court of the temple, was prepared a place for some base idol. The whole was presented in vision to the prophet. If it should please God to give any man a clear view of his glory and majesty, and of all the abominations committing in any one city, he would then admit the justice of the severest punishments God should inflict thereon.

Ezekiel 10:1-7

A Vision of the Burning of the City

The fire being taken from between the wheels, under the cherubim, Ezekiel 1:13, seems to have signified the wrath of God to be executed upon Jerusalem. It intimated that the fire of Divine wrath, which kindles judgment upon a people, is just and holy; and in the great day, the earth, and all the works that are therein, will be burnt up.

The glory of the God of Israel

Ezekiel 11:22

Then the cherubim lifted their wings and rose into the air with their wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered above them.

Of Jews' abominations

Ezekiel 8:5-6

Then the Lord said to me, "Son of man, look toward the north." So I looked, and there to the north, beside the entrance to the gate of the altar, stood the idol that had made the Lord so angry.

"Son of man," he said, "Do you see what they are doing? Do you see the great sins the people of Israel are doing to drive me from my Temple? But come, and you will see even greater sins than these!"

Of their punishment

Ezekiel 9:10

So I will not spare them or have any pity on them. I will fully repay them for all they have done."

God Restores Dried Bones to Life

Ezekiel 37:1-14

No created power could restore human bones to life. God alone could cause them to live. Skin and flesh covered them, and the wind was then told to blow upon these bodies; and they were restored to life. The wind was an emblem of the Spirit of God, and represented his quickening powers.

The vision was to encourage the desponding Jews; to predict both their restoration after the captivity, and also their recovery from their present and long-continued dispersion. It was also a clear intimation of the resurrection of the dead; and it represents the power and grace of God, in the conversion of the most hopeless sinners to himself.

Of a man with a measuring line

Ezekiel 40

When we despair to be satisfied as to any difficulty we meet with, let us bless God that our salvation does not depend upon it, but that things necessary are plain enough; and let us wait till God shall reveal even this unto us.

This chapter describes two outward courts of the temple. Whether the personage here mentioned was the Son of God, or a created angel, is not clear.

Understanding the mysteries of God's Kingdom.

Ezekiel 41

After the prophet had observed the courts, he was brought to the temple. If we attend to instructions in the plainer parts of religion, and profit by them, we shall be led further into an acquaintance with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

In the Father's House are many mansions.

Ezekiel 42

In this chapter are described the priests' chambers, their use, and the dimensions of the holy mount on which the temple stood. These chambers were many.

Jesus said, in my Father's house are many mansions: in his house on earth there are many; multitudes, by faith, are lodging in his sanctuary, and yet there is room. These chambers, though private, were near the temple.

Our religious services in our chambers, must prepare for public devotions, and further us in improving them, as our opportunities are.

Visions come through the Holy Spirit.

Ezekiel 43

After Ezekiel had surveyed the temple of God, he had a vision of the glory of God. When Christ crucified, and the things freely given to us of God, through Him, are shown to us by the Holy Ghost, they make us ashamed for our sins.

This frame of mind prepares us for fuller discoveries of the mysteries of redeeming love; and the whole of the Scriptures should be opened and applied, that men may see their sins, and repent of them.

Ordinances relative to Christ, the true priests

Ezekiel 44

This chapter contains ordinances relative to the true priests. The prince evidently means Christ, may remind us that no other can enter heaven, the true sanctuary, as Christ did; namely, by virtue of his own Excellency, and his personal holiness, righteousness, and strength.

He who is the Brightness of Jehovah's glory entered by his own holiness; but that way is shut to the whole human race, and we all must enter as sinners, by faith in his blood, and by the power of his grace.

The princes will rule with justice.

Ezekiel 45

In the period here foretold, the worship and the ministers of God will be provided for; the princes will rule with justice, as holding their power under Christ; the people will live in peace, ease, and godliness. These things seem to be represented in language taken from the customs of the times in which the prophet wrote.

Christ is our Passover that is sacrificed for us: we celebrate the memorial of that sacrifice, and feast upon it, triumphing in our deliverance out of the Egyptian slavery of sin, and our preservation from the destroying sword of Divine justice, in the Lord's supper, which is our Passover feast; as the whole Christian life is, and must be, the feast of the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The ordinances of worship

Ezekiel 46

The ordinances of worship for the prince and for the people, are here described, and the gifts the prince may bestow on his sons and servants.

Our Lord has directed us to do many duties, but he has also left many things to our choice, that those who delight in his commandments may abound therein to his glory, without entangling their own consciences, or prescribing rules unfit for others.

The waters signify the gospel of Christ.

Ezekiel 47

These waters signify the gospel of Christ, which went forth from Jerusalem, and spread into the countries about; also the gifts and powers of the Holy Ghost which accompanied it, by virtue of which is spread far, and produced blessed effects. Christ is the Temple; and he is the Door; from him the living waters flow, out of his pierced side. They are increasing waters.

Redemption of portions of land

Ezekiel 48

Here is a description of the several portions of the land belonging to each tribe. In gospel times, behold all things are become new.

Much is wrapped up in emblems and numbers. This method God has used to state mysterious truths in his word, not to be more clearly revealed till the proper time and season. But into the church of Christ, both in its state of warfare and triumph, there is free access by faith, from every side.

Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven for all believers. Whoever will, may come, and take of the water of life, of the tree of life, freely

Ezekiel teaches by pantomime

Feigns dumbness

Ezekiel 3:26

And I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so you won't be able to pray for them, for they are rebellious.

You will become a symbol for the people.

Ezekiel 24:27

And when he arrives, your voice will suddenly return so you can talk to him, and you will be a symbol for these people. Then they will know that I am the Lord."

They became able to speak.

Ezekiel 33:22

The previous evening the Lord had taken hold of me and opened my mouth, so I would be able to speak when this man arrived the next morning.

Symbolizes the siege of Jerusalem by drawings on a tile

Ezekiel 4

The prophet was to represent the siege of Jerusalem by signs. He was to lie on his left side for a number of days, supposed to be equal to the years from the establishment of idolatry. All that the prophet sets before the children of his people, about the destruction of Jerusalem, is to show that sin is the provoking cause of the ruin of that once flourishing city.

Ezekiel shaves himself

Ezekiel 5:1-4

"Son of man, take a sharp sword and use it as a razor to shave your head and beard. Use a scale to weigh the hair into three equal parts.

Place a third of it at the center of your map of Jerusalem. After acting out the siege, burn it there. Scatter another third across your map and slash at it with a sword. Scatter the last third to the wind, for I will scatter my people with the sword.

Keep just a bit of the hair and tie it up in your robe. Then take a few of these hairs out and throw them into the fire, burning them up. A fire will then spread from this remnant and destroy all of Israel.

The prophet must shave off the hair of his head and beard, which signifies God's utter rejecting and abandoning that people. One part must be burned in the midst of the city, denoting the multitudes that should perish by famine and pestilence.

Another part was to be cut in pieces, representing the many who were slain by the sword.

Another part was to be scattered in the wind, denoting the carrying away of some into the land of the conqueror, and the flight of others into the neighboring countries for shelter.

A small quantity of the third portion was to be bound in his shirts, as that of which he is very careful. But few were reserved. To whatever refuge sinners flee, the fire and sword of God's wrath will consume them.

Removes his belongings to illustrate the approaching Jewish captivity

Ezekiel 12:3-7

By the preparation for removal, and his breaking through the wall of his house at evening, as one desirous to escape from the enemy, the prophet signified the conduct and fate of Zedekiah. When God has delivered us, we must glorify him and edify others, by acknowledging our sins.

Those who by afflictions are brought to this, are made to know that God is the Lord, and may help to bring others to know him.

Employs a boiling pot to symbolize the destruction of Jerusalem

Ezekiel 21

Here is an explanation of the parable in the last chapter. It is declared that the Lord was about to cut off Jerusalem and the whole land, that all might know it was his decree against a wicked and rebellious people. It behoves those who denounce the awful wrath of God against sinners, to show that they do not desire the woeful day. The example of Christ teaches us to lament over those whose ruin we declare.

Ezekiel's popularity

Ezekiel 33:31-32

So they come pretending to be sincere and sit before you listening. But they have no intention of doing what I tell them. They express love with their mouths, but their hearts seek only after money.

You are very entertaining to them, like someone who sings love songs with a beautiful voice or plays fine music on an instrument. They hear what you say, but they don't do it!

Unworthy and corrupt motives often lead men to the places where the word of God is faithfully preached. Many come to find somewhat to oppose: far more come of curiosity or mere habit. Men may have their hearts changed.

But whether men hear or forbear, they will know by the event that a servant of God has been among them. All who will not know the worth of mercies by the improvement of them, will justly be made to know their worth by the want of them.

Life Application

As in Ezekiel's day, it is easy for us today to forget that God has a personal interest in each one of us. We may feel insignificant or out of control when we look at world events. But knowing that God is ultimately in control, that he cares, and that he is willing to be known by us can bring a new sense of purpose to our lives.

How do you measure your worth? Are you valuable because of your achievements and potential, or because God, your Creator and Designer, declares you valuable?

Key verses:

“And he said to me, ‘Son of man, listen carefully and take to heart all the words I speak to you. Go now to your countrymen in exile and speak to them. Say to them, “This is what the Sovereign LORD says,” whether they listen or fail to listen’ ” (Ezekiel 3:10-11).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*.

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