

Ezekiel: A Jet Tour. The Son of Man with God's Message for God's People: Severe Judgment Is Coming, But Remember: Restoration is Sure to Come!"

Many think Ezekiel is a mostly perplexing maze of incoherent visions --- a kaleidoscope of whirling wheels and dry bones that confuse us in our interpretations. This impression often causes readers to shy away from studying the book and to miss one of the great literary and spiritual portions of the Old Testament! (Charlie Dyer)

We might say that Ezekiel saw the dirt on the glass of his window to the world, but he also saw through the glass far into the future. It's like Ezekiel sees the massive Irma-like hurricane that's sure to come & bring utter devastation! BUT he sees past it to the blue, clear skies & time of peace & rebuilding that surely will come afterwards!

When we get to know Him we will be able to see sin, and we will hate it. We will also be able to proclaim judgment fearlessly. But most of all, we will be able to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. The future is bright. We just need to be able to see through our dirty windows to the Morning Star rising in the east. (G Campbell Morgan)

I. THE "SON OF MAN" (Ezekiel)

Reconstructing the life & ministry of Ezekiel (from the dates in his prophecy):

1. Ezekiel was born in 622BC
2. He was deported to Babylon in 597BC
3. He then died in approximately 560BC

When Ezekiel arrived in Babylon in 597BC, no doubt DANIEL was already very well known (as Daniel was taken to Babylon in 605BC; and Daniel is mentioned 3x in Ezekiel's prophecy (14.14, 20; 28.3)

II. THE SOBERING TIMES!

3 waves of the exile of Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar:

- 605BC - 1st wave (Daniel)
- 597BC - 2nd wave (Ezekiel)
- 586BC - 3rd wave - Jerusalem burnt/ransacked/destroyed

God raised up Ezekiel for a two-fold purpose:

- (1) to remind them of the sins which had brought judgment and exile upon them;
- (2) to encourage and strengthen their faith by prophecies of future restoration and glory." (Charles Feinberg)

Simply: God raised Ezekiel up to preach: imminent judgment & future restoration.

III. THE SEVERE MESSAGE

Some themes that come out in Ezekiel's message

1. The nature of God: the righteous, sovereign, just & faithful nature of God
2. The purpose and nature of God's judgment.
3. Individual responsibility -- a person was not delivered from God's curse by the righteousness of the majority of the nation or some other person's spirituality; but *every person* is accountable to God.
4. Ethical, religious, moral, corrupt history of Israel. Vividly, Israel was seen as a spiritual prostitute who had been wooed and married by God, but had prostituted herself by going after the gods of the nations.
5. The nature of Israel's restoration & millennial/kingdom worship -- anyone who wants to know and study and form a biblical eschatology must know these sections of Ezekiel.

❖ The *grand theme is the **Glorify of God*** - God makes His name known among Israel and all the nations of the world! God does ALL things for His glory; that is, to make his name known.

The pervasive nature of sin in Ezekiel's prophecy:

The fierce, coming judgment upon Judah.

- (1) Ezek 8-11 gives series of judgments & the Glory of God departing from the Temple.
- (2) Ezek 12-24 is series of signs, parables & messages of judgment.
- (3) Ezek 13 - message to false prophets (vv.3-6 & vv.8-16 - God's judgment on them)
- (4) Ezek 14 - the Jewish elders/leaders are guilty (v.14:6!)
- (5) Ezek 16 - God pictures Israel as a harlot who leaves God & prostitutes herself with other gods, nations, & lovers.
- (6) Ezek 21:30-32 - God's coming judgment
- (7) Ezek 22:25-28; note language of judgment in 22:20-22.
- (8) Ezek 18:30-32 - God's call to repent & live!

The judgment on the foreign nations (Ezek 25-32)

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Ezekiel is one of the Old Testament Prophets that speaks most clearly & emphatically about the future, earthly kingdom (this harmonizes with Rev 20:1-6).

Summary: Christ will return. He'll establish His earthly kingdom. God will regather Israel into the land & they'll dwell securely in the land, be regenerated with new hearts, they'll obey the Lord & worship Him!

Some *GUIDELINES* as we INTERPRET prophetic portions of the Bible (proper hermeneutics for prophecies):

1. **Retain** normal, **grammatical** interpretation of Scripture (what did the AUTHOR mean by what HE wrote at THAT time to his IMMEDIATE audience?)
2. Understand the ***progress** of revelation* and that we must start with the OT and THEN move to the NT. We will err in our interpretation if we start with the NT and re-interpret the OT thru the NT b/c *meaning* is lost. The OT writers/audience didn't have the NT and thus we would be finding interpretations that God never intended (faulty/erroneous). Authorial intent is key. When Ezekiel spoke of the promises of land to Israel (it's not to be spiritualized to be fulfilled in the NT church).
3. Retain **consistency** in normal, plain interpretations. We cannot be literal in some sections and the spiritualize other paragraphs. We can't pick and choose what's literal and nonliteral -- we must be consistent.
4. Take **words** of prophecy (including numbers, nations, and place names) in their normal grammatical sense without spiritualizing it. For instance, in Isa 65.20 Isaiah said that many people will live well beyond 100 years of age. When Revelation 20 mentions 1,000 6+ times it should be understood normally and plainly.
5. Remember that prophecy is to focus primarily on the **Messiah** and on the establishing of God's promises and the Messiah's reign. Rev 19.10 tells us: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy". What does that mean: "the purpose of prophecy is to testify to and point to Jesus Christ and bring HIM glory!"
6. **Compare** other parallel passages and study them together. For instance: Isaiah 9, 24, Joel 2, and Zech 14 and Rev 20 all need to be studied together.
7. Note there are prophecies that HAVE BEEN fulfilled and there are prophecies that are YET TO BE fulfilled. Consider Isaiah 9.6 which deals with the first coming of Christ to be born (and it WAS fulfilled literally) and then Isa 9.7 which deals with Christ's coming kingdom (and it has YET to be fulfilled). -- but it must be fulfilled normally.

All of this will lead to: **PREMILLENNIALISM** -- this is the view of understanding bible prophecy that the MILLENNIUM (1,000 year earthly kingdom will be PREceded by Christ's return to earth.

In other words: Jesus returns (Rev 19:11-21) BEFORE the 1,000 year kingdom (Rev 20:1-6).

The basic tenets of **premillennialism** are:

1. *Christ will return at the end of the age and will reign with His saints for 1,000 years as King in the land of Israel.*
2. *In the kingdom, Israel as a nation will experience the blessings of God promised to Abraham and David pertaining to Israel's land, nationality ('seed'), and king ('throne').*
3. *The Church today is *not* fulfilling these promises that God made to Israel as nation. Thus, it's YET to be fulfilled. And as sure as God is faithful, the regathering of Israel, the regeneration of Israel, and the renewed worship will surely occur!*

Reasons why I am a **futuristic premillennialist** (that is, I see a literal earthly kingdom to come in the future immediately following Christ's glorious coming).

1. The starting point with the Old Testament & progressive revelation prophesies it. (progressive revelation)
2. A normal, plain reading of the Old Testament necessitates it. (hermeneutic)
3. Jesus came & spoke of a future kingdom which confirms it. (Jesus' teaching)
4. The faithful, true, and trustworthy character of God demands it. (character of God)
5. The New Testament revelation of Israel's regathering & regeneration supports it. (NT teaching in the Epistles)
6. Viewing Israel and the Church as distinct entities within the glorious plan of God requires it. (Israel & the Church)
7. The reality that many of the Old Testament prophecies have yet to be literally fulfilled maintains it. (remaining prophecies)

IV. THE SWEET AND SURE HOPE

Brief summary: God will regather, regenerate, and bless his people.

For the purposes here, we'll highlight only 4 examples:

#1) In Ezek 11.13 - Ezekiel asks: "God, will you bring the remnant of Israel to a complete end? (Quite simply: Are you thru with national Israel)?"

ANSWER? 11:14-20 - absolutely not! they'll be regathered, regenerated!

1. God will GATHER them (17a)
2. God will GIVE them the land (17b)
3. God will reGENERATE them (19)
4. God will GRANT them one heart, a new spirit (19)
5. God will GRACE them with obedience (20)
6. God will GO with them (20b)

#2) Ezek 36 - a clear prophecy of the land & people of Israel.

- GOD'S PLAN & PROMISE IN THE KINGDOM FOR ISRAEL (THE LAND & THE PEOPLE!) Ezek 36:1-21 - the land (lit. 'mountains') of Israel will be dwelt again & inhabited again.
 - a) The Clarity of the Place/Location = land of Israel (v.1-6)
 - b) The Sure Promise of God to Bless Israel (v.7-12)
 - c) The Reminder of God's judgment of Israel's Past, 586BC (v.13-21) (note v.15 - israel will never be insulted by the nations!)
 - d) The Vindication of God's Holy Name (v.22-32)
 - >>*Regeneration of Israel
 - (1) Gathering from the nations (24)
 - (2) Bringing into the land of Israel (24b)
 - (3) Sprinkle clean water & be cleansed (25)
 - (4) Will be given a NEW heart & a new spirit (26)
 - (5) NO heart of stone but now a heart of FLESH (26b)
 - (6) will WALK in God's Ways (27)
 - (7) will live in the land as God's people with God as THEIR GOD (28)
 - e) The Rebuilding of the Land of Israel (v.33-38)

#3) Ezek 38-39 - the prophecy against Gog & Magog

- **Big Picture:** "The description in these chapters depicts a final attempt to possess the land of Israel, but without success, for God will defend Israel according to His eternal covenant of peace described (Ezek

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34-37). Gog's defeat is a vindication of God's faithfulness to His covenant promises (34:29; cf. 37:22-28). God will not permit His holy name to be polluted any more by the dispersion of Israel (39:7; 36:20)." (Ralph Alexander).

- **The Time:** The time of Gog & Magog? >> There's much discussion on it but it appears to me that Ezekiel 38-39 occurs after the 1,000 Millennial kingdom. A strong basis for this position is the explicit reference to Gog and Magog in Rev 20.8. The terms employed in Rev 20.8 are the same as those in Ezek 38-39. Nations from among those in the Millennium would be present to observe the destruction of Gog in fulfillment of Ezek 38-39. **[Read Rev 20:7-10!]**

#4) Ezek 40-48 - future Millennial temple, animal sacrifices, division of the land.

These chapters explain HOW Israel's new kingdom way of life will be established

1. A new **TEMPLE** will be built as a sign of GOD's presence among his people (Ezek 40-43)
2. A new **SACRIFICIAL SERVICE SYSTEM** will be established so people will have access to God (Ezek 44-46).
3. A new **DIVISION OF THE LAND** will be made for the people to live and reside (Ezek 47-48).